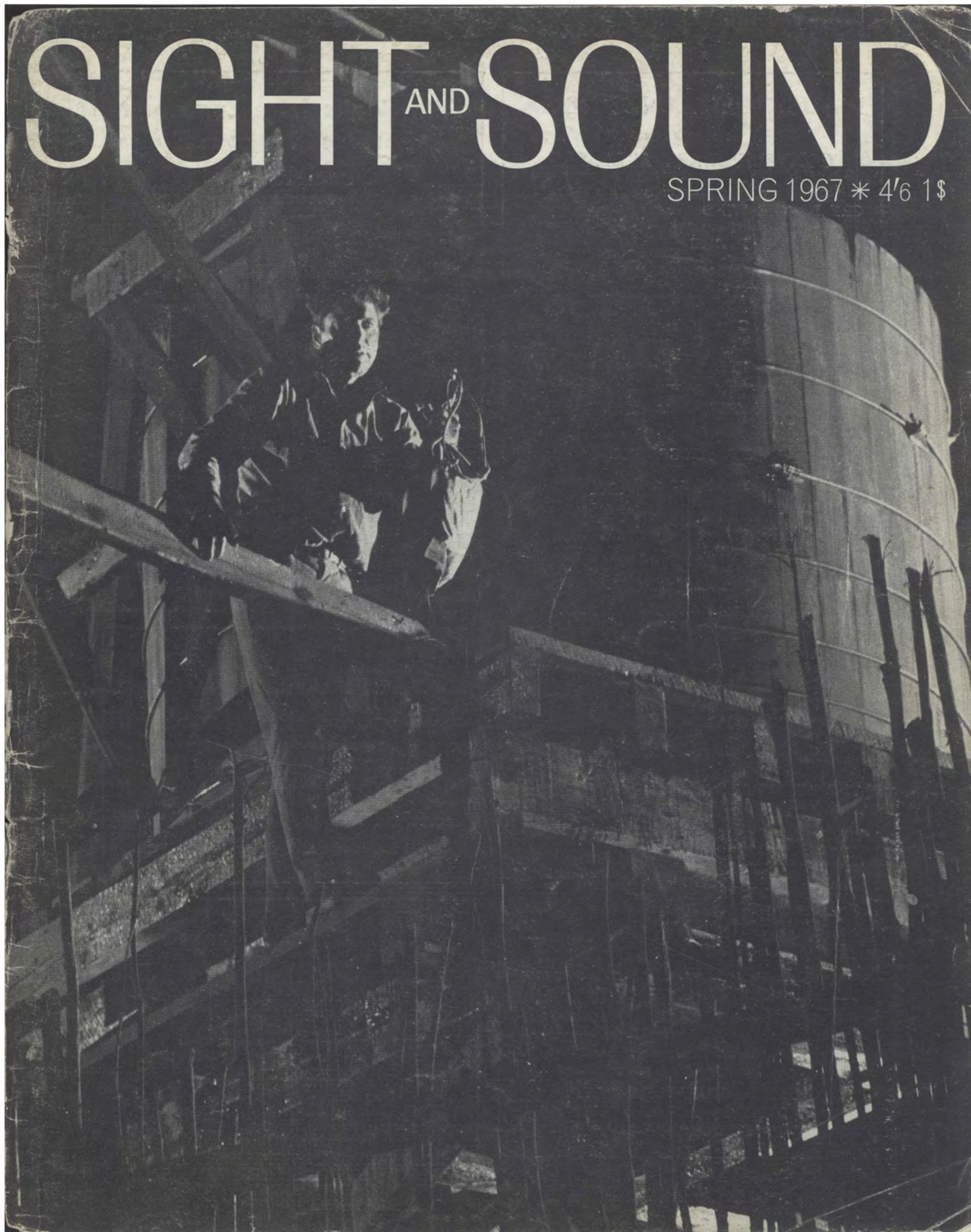


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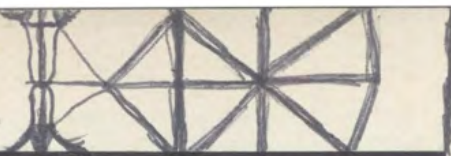
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Two films (1) **ACCIDENT**



by Tom Milne

THIRD TIME LUCKY, as they say. For if *Muriel* and *La Guerre est Finie* were rather less than fairly treated by the critics, *Accident* has been justly acclaimed as masterly in its exploration, through a dislocated time structure, of the turbulent emotions lying unspoken and unperceived beneath a calm surface. Not that Losey is content simply to follow Resnais: making graceful acknowledgment of his debt, he pushes even further along these new paths. In *Accident* there is no mysterious lover from the past, no haunting loyalty for a lost cause, to lend dramatic echoes to the situation: simply a banal incident, involving more or less banal people, whose clipped, glancing conversation is never of the slightest apparent consequence. And Losey's style is all his own: a return to the simplicity of his early films, with the later baroque splendours still lending their riches, but reduced to order by firmness of line. Starting with an accident and ending with its echo, constructed out of a chain of interlocking emotions which lead right back where they started from, gradually generating a beam of light to illuminate the central situation before it dies away again, *Accident* is as simple, as bafflingly perfect—and as difficult to take apart—as a circle.

"All you need is a starting point. Here, for instance, on this lawn," says Charley (Stanley Baker) in one of the key scenes, the long, lazy summer afternoon when the characters are almost provoked into burning their social boats in speech. So all right, let's start on the lawn. Five adults (and two children) pottering happily about on a hot, endless summer Sunday, probably not thinking about anything in particular: the youthfully middle-aged Oxford don, Stephen (Dirk Bogarde), who would like to be having an affair with one of his pupils, the beautiful Austrian student Anna; his wife Rosalind (Vivien Merchant), contentedly pregnant, but still lazily watchful; his friend Charley who, unknown to him, is in fact having an affair with Anna; another pupil, William (Michael York), who is going to marry Anna; and Anna herself (Jacqueline Sassard), something of an enigma, not exactly throwing herself at Stephen's head, but obviously interested.

Suddenly, while casually describing these people basking

on the lawn as part of his explanation of the process of observation which goes into writing a novel, Charley shatters the air of drowsy serenity—"... and Stephen is having an affair with a girl at Oxford." Maybe a joke, maybe not, but no one cares to pick it up, and after an embarrassed pause, serenity returns and the afternoon continues as before. But not quite as before. Charley's remark has radiated secretly, and the casual round of tea, tennis and strolling conversation now conceals an alert, growing sexual competition as, wordlessly and almost unaware of what they are doing to each other, the three men begin to fight for Anna.

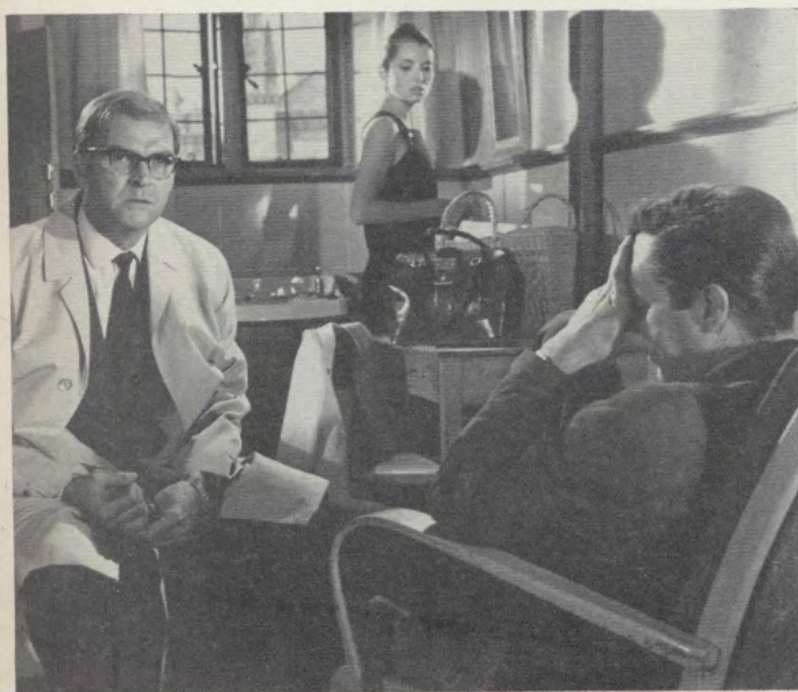
These people are all friends, civilised, comfortable and urbane, capable of assessing their own behaviour and of attributing reasonably accurate motives to the others; but between them lie dark areas which they do not recognise, abrasions on a cool surface. When Charley, for instance, becomes aware of the electricity sparked off by his remark, and adds to it by calling to Stephen to ask if he has heard, is he conscious of the real extent of his malice? Equally, when Stephen mutters 'yes' as he bends busily over the flower-bed he is weeding, and his wife's voice echoes 'yes!' with quizzical clarity from another part of the lawn, is she aware that she is striking a match under Stephen's smouldering guilt? The remarkable thing about the film is that one can interpret the characters and their motives almost any way one likes. Charley, for example, may know that Stephen is attracted by Anna; or his remark may merely have been a shot in the dark; or it may even have been a wry joke at his own expense. One never really knows which. But the point is, here as throughout the film, that what matters is not the remark (situation, emotion, gesture) itself, but the way it brings new, unexpected facets to light.

* * *

The signs are discreetly posted for us in the opening shot, as the camera stares motionlessly at the façade of Stephen's house. The night is dark, a plane passes overhead, a bird cries, a typewriter chatters faintly inside, and the camera begins to track slowly towards the house, away from the roar of an approaching car which gradually splinters to a screeching crash. Unexpectedly, the camera continues tracking forward steadily, almost wilfully oblivious, until the front door opens and Stephen emerges to investigate. The accident in which William is killed, in other words, is one thing; what Stephen makes of it is another. And this distinction is underlined by the sense of abrasion between sound and image. First, the peaceful contemplation of the house shattered by the sounds of the crash; then the dreamlike quiet of the two bodies lying in the car, shattered by the sound of Stephen's shoes scraping harshly on the metal sides, his voice grating on the still air.

Brilliantly shot to accentuate the atmosphere of bewilderment and mystery (rapid track along a grassy verge, passing footsteps, inset shots of startled horse and pale moon glaring down), the accident is made to seem a key. And Stephen, after his initial guilt about William's death ("Don't! You're standing on his face!"), takes it as such, building round it a drama which will bring Anna to him. He assumes she was driving, shelters her from the police, and then makes love to her, tacitly expecting her to respond. In fact there is no mystery about the accident, it is a key to nothing. Anna leaves for home because William is dead and there is nothing left for her in Oxford; if there are darker, more secret reasons for her departure—her disillusionment with both Charley and Stephen—these were settled long before the accident.

Losey makes this clear in two ways. First, by his demystification of the accident. The last shot of the film, which in a way brings it full circle, is again of the façade of the house, by daylight this time, as the front door closes, a dog runs down the drive to the road, and a car crashes. Seen in broad daylight (no moon, no horse, no shadows), the accident is simply an accident; and by implication the only fact of the first accident is that William dies. Secondly, there is the aftermath of the scene on the lawn. By snubbing William and



accepting Stephen's invitation to go for a walk, Anna has made her intentions as plain as she can. But Stephen is still held back by his inhibitions, and nothing happens. Their hands rest on a gate, close but not touching; after a time, as though giving up, Anna says "Shall we go back?" And as they turn back to the house, the camera stays where it is, gazing at the empty landscape as though lamenting the end of the affair. It is, in fact, the end. The next time Stephen meets Anna is when he returns unexpectedly from London to find her sleeping with Charley; and the time after that she announces her engagement to William. The accident is merely a postscript to a chapter already closed.

The strange, hypnotic quality in this shot of an empty landscape suffuses the whole film, so that as one watches scene after scene unfolding in the serene stillness of an Oxford summer, one is constantly made to sense the extraordinary beneath the ordinary. A shot of a man standing in the distance with a raised umbrella on a bright sunny day contains an indescribable charge of latent menace. It is only later that one realises why, when we discover that the man is Stephen, that the umbrella is a protection against garden sprinklers, and that he is nerving himself to face Charley's distraught wife, Laura, who is being driven mad with grief and jealousy. But the charge works both ways: Laura, in her unsuitable black oilskins, becomes identified with the black figure poised against the house with raised umbrella, awkward and out of place, deprived of any sense of belonging.

The film is studded with these strange, apparently meaningless shots, which hover indelibly in the mind until they are completed (it is only later, for instance, that one realises that the long-held shot over the gate marks the last moment at which Stephen might have achieved happiness with Anna). Here one comes up interestingly against the question of time in the film. Although the main body of the action is a flashback—or rather, a series of flashbacks—occasioned by the accident and describing Stephen's recollection of the events which led up to it, the time sequence appears to be fairly simple. With one exception, the various scenes are recalled in logical (and almost certainly chronological) sequence, as in a conventional narrative. And the exception—the intercutting of Stephen's visit to Laura with his visit to his own wife after she has gone to stay with her mother—is again perfectly logical: the scenes with Laura are conjured in his mind as he talks to his wife. Time is allowed to be sequential, but on other levels is completely annihilated.

* * *

Twice during the course of the film, a clock chimes out, and at each stroke the camera marks time derisively by jumping along a row of grinning gargoyles on the college wall. Elsewhere, climactic points—Stephen's return home from London to find Charley and Anna sleeping together, his departure from the college after Anna has left to catch her plane—are marked by insistently chiming clocks which seek to place their seal on things. But in this story, nothing can be defined or limited in this way. An emotion exists independently of time, perhaps remaining constant, perhaps growing weaker or stronger as more illumination is thrown on it. William's jealousy of Stephen, for instance, is most clearly illuminated during the Eton-type wall game at his aristocratic home, when his light emphasis of "I think *you* should go in goal" indicates that he is assigning the most dangerous position to his rival; but the same jealousy, dark, unconscious, and as yet without illumination, exists much earlier, before he has even met Anna, when he refuses to let Stephen effect an introduction.

A more complex instance comes in the sequence with Francesca, the old flame whom Stephen looks up during his visit to London for a television interview. Here the illumination is not exterior (fed by external events or actions) but purely interior. From the way her name is introduced by the man at the TV studio in a sort of cross-talk act ("Do you ever see Francesca? The Provost's daughter? The daughter of the Provost?"), one is led to expect something hard and sharp, a

sort of part-time college whore, perhaps; later, this impression is strengthened by Rosalind's indifference and the Provost's knowing leer. But in fact the scenes of their evening together have a tender, candle-lit quality, a dream of pure romance, as Francesca (Delphine Seyrig) flits gracefully to and fro in her room, or is seen shimmering through a delicately rain-spotted restaurant window. The accompanying dialogue, much more down-to-earth ("I'm in consumer research, did you know?") and much more strained in its quest for romance ("You don't look a day older"—"Oh really? I'm ten years older"), is significantly dissociated from the images, as though it had nothing whatsoever to do with them. In recollecting this scene, Stephen is obviously creating the perfect romance, an amalgam perhaps of his first love for Francesca, his love for his wife, the love he hopes for with Anna.

The feeling that this sequence is fabricated in recollection by Stephen for his own pleasure is increased by the fact that, whereas the rest of the film is shot with a diamond-sharp clarity, the Francesca scenes have much softer, gauzier tones. By extension, therefore, the scene in the TV studio—at first glance the only unsatisfactory one in the film because it feels like a Losey-Pinter self-parody—is also fabricated: its thin, two-dimensional texture, its note of hysteria, is the way Stephen remembers it, as something grotesque, best left unexplored. In it one finds none of the tiny, indefinable details which lend their weight to the texture of the rest of the film: the automatic gesture with which Stephen pushes the rocking-horse as he passes on the way to the room where Anna has been sleeping with Charley; the sudden flood of light as a cloud passes over at the start of his walk with Anna; the abrupt stutter by the train which has been puffing away steadily in the distance during the accident.

In a way, of course, being Stephen's recollection, the whole film (with the exception, naturally, of the accident and last scenes) is his fabrication, with Charley being beastly, Anna provocative, Rosalind patient, and William callow. (It is interesting, in fact, to note the disparity between the dignified, hesitant Stephen of the flashbacks, and the man who virtually rapes Anna after the accident.) But the characters refuse to be limited by what we are shown of them. The whole film is put together virtually without transitions, using only direct cuts, and as with Resnais, it is in the gaps that the real story is told.

Stephen's whole situation, for instance, his fear of sinking into staid middle-age, is conveyed in the cuts linking three brief scenes: from Rosalind at home (jokingly saying "I'm not too old for you") to a languorous Anna in his study ("Write me an essay on what the problem seems to you"), to the dons' common-room (with the Provost preparing to launch yet again into his pet story). Similarly but more obliquely, the intercutting of Stephen's visits to Rosalind and Laura effects a curious kind of osmosis between the two women: Laura, distraught but struggling to conceal it, evokes the tension which must lie beneath Rosalind's air of calm competence. Further: this osmosis (if that is the word) is only complete when one adds to it the identification made earlier between Rosalind and Anna and which has since been hanging fire (the scene in which Stephen is deceived by the hem of a dressing-gown whisking out of sight into thinking that Rosalind is Anna; and its complement when he discovers Anna on his staircase, dressed exactly like Rosalind). If the Francesca sequence is a male dream of love fulfilled, the film also adumbrates a female dream of love betrayed.

More, perhaps, than any other Losey film, with its bland surface being invisibly gnawed away from within, *Accident* forces one to look and look again, to make connections where none are apparent. Perfectly served by his entire cast (invidious to single out names, but Stanley Baker and Vivien Merchant are miraculously good), by his designer (Carmen Dillon), cameraman (Gerry Fisher) and scriptwriter (Pinter), Losey has made a film in which nothing is signalled, nothing given away. As with *Muriel*, you have to do your share of the work, watching patiently and absorbedly as the characters live their lives, cook their omelettes, exchange their trivial chat, and rewarded almost constantly by the moments of glittering illumination.

TOP: DELPHINE SEYRIG. FAR LEFT: BAKER, JACQUELINE SASSARD, BOGARDE AT THEIR LAST MEETING IN ANNA'S COLLEGE ROOM. LEFT: THE SUMMER SUNDAY: VIVIEN MERCHANT, JACQUELINE SASSARD, BOGARDE.



Two
films(2)

BLOW~UP

Carey Harrison

UNSHAVEN, RED-EYED, dressed in rags, a group of men emerge wearily from a slum dosshouse. It is early morning. A young man separates himself from the group, turns down a side street, and climbs into a limousine. He drives to work: his destination proves to be a fashion photographer's studio. Without changing, the young man grabs his camera and plunges into the routine, bobbing and weaving as he photographs the models, barking at them, shouting. The sweat-stained tramp disguise looks bizarre against the antiseptic chic of the sets. It turns out that Thomas is a fashion photographer who hates his work and despises his subjects; he lives for reportage photography, and the dosshouse sequence is to form a central part of his forthcoming book of Cartier Bresson-style photographs. The first mystery of the film is resolved.

With *Blow-Up* Michelangelo Antonioni has turned to

making films in English, and while the film was being shot in London last year, speculation was intense. The film was said to be a devastating exposé of the swinging scene and the lascivious world of fashion photography; the movie became a cult among its expected subjects. But *Blow-Up* is not a study in decadence. His easy life cramps the central character's initiative, and contempt for his own success has upset his values: he regards fashion photography and the fashionable world as utterly unreal, documentary photography and the outside world as completely 'real'. The discrimination is too glib, and the shock is all the more severe when he discovers that the outside world is just as opaque as the sets inside his studio. There is no 'more real' world. The affluent life is the context of this discovery, and not the subject of the film's investigation. Perhaps Antonioni saw, too, that 'swinging London' exists only as a trap for amateur sociologists: the

biggest common factor among the 'swinging people' is their anxiety to disown all common factors between them and other 'swinging people'. Their membership card is to have joined no club, which permits each of them to deride the squalid 'scene', and look forward to *Blow-Up's* revelations without feeling exposed.

But Antonioni has not let himself be used. He is not concerned with the fashion photographer as icon of the pop world, nor with the idolatry of the girls who surround him. The hero doesn't need them: he ignores both status and personal relations. As a photographer, he believes he has a consuming, satisfactory relationship with reality, the surface of reality, the subject matter of his art. And the crisis he experiences is with his material, not with the women in his life. By means of the camera he believes himself to be a faithful interpreter of reality, and when his means prove fallible, all his self-confidence is challenged. For the first time in his life, it seems, he realises how deceptive reality can be, that all his life it has been unfaithful to him and his camera. The audience experiences the film as a series of similar discoveries. The opening shot presents a group of tramps, but we are already deceived: one of them is a rich young man in disguise. And like us, Thomas himself is gulled by the properties of the camera, and finally undeceived by it. In the little deceptions of the film, Antonioni invites us to share Thomas' downfall as well as observe it.

* * *

Thomas is searching for a lyrical shot to close his new book of photographs, as counterpoint to the squalor of the 'real life' represented on the other pages. Out hunting for some bric-a-brac to decorate his studio, he strolls across a park. The sky is cloudy, the trees disturbed, but the scene is peaceful. Two lovers embrace in a clearing. Thomas skips from one hiding place to another, crouching behind one tree, then the next, taking photographs. He is intoxicated with the activity. But the girl hears a noise and comes over to demand the film. Thomas refuses, and returns to his studio to develop it. When he blows up the prints, he gradually discovers that the scene he was photographing was quite different from the idyllic tableau he thought he had seen: the gentle rapture with which he hoped to close his brutal series of photographs, shots of the old, the poor, the desolate, the photograph that was to be such a contrast to all this, proves to be a document revealing murder in a London park.

This is unfolded in a thrilling sequence, to which the recent scrutiny of photographic evidence in the Kennedy assassination lends an added spice: in increasingly magnified blow-ups of certain prints, a body in the grass and a gunman in the bushes emerge from the apparently innocuous photographs. It is night. In a terrifying stillness, Thomas comes to the clearing in the park. He finds the body. Returning to his studio, he discovers that all the photographs have gone. All have been taken except one, a blurred, inconclusive print which leaves him with no proof of the event at all—apart from the body. He hurries to a friend's house, and urges him to come and witness the corpse. But it is late, a party is in full swing, his friend is drunk, reluctant, and at last Thomas gives up and spends the night there, forgetting his quest. Throughout the day there have been distractions: the girl in the park trailed him to his studio and tried once again to get the film back, but settled for seduction instead; there is a painter who lives in the same studio, and his girl friend makes fruitless passes at Thomas; two aspiring cover girls sue to model clothes, and end by taking theirs off. These are insignificant dalliances, but his surrender to the party proves his undoing: he wakes late and hastens anxiously to the park, but the body has gone.

Thomas is a man who uses language mockingly, disparagingly, with the irony aimed at himself; who contradicts himself, who is content to be confusing, irritating in his words, because he knows he can tell the story of his life in pictures. He believes his photographs tell the truth. But now that the corpse has disappeared, he has no means left of telling this adventure at all. Who will believe him, without the body or the photographs? Not only his mode of expression but his

mode of perception is threatened: the fallibility of his perception, made real to him when he discovered what the camera had seen and he had missed, is now endorsed by losing all the evidence of that discovery itself.

In *Deserto Rosso* Giuliana was a neurotic who demanded that her environment protect her, justify her, answer her needs; streets and houses echo her emotions. She had to learn to live with their indifference. Thomas has to learn that he is no more powerful over nature with a camera than without. The final scene is a ritual penitence: as he leaves the park, he comes upon a student rag group, all whited up as clowns. These students are glimpsed at various stages of the film, passing in the street, and we recognise them now. They are miming a game of tennis on the deserted courts. Thomas stops to watch. The ball is struck out of the court, and all the students watch its imaginary flight, in the direction, as it happens, of Thomas. When it lands, and they have mimed watching it bounce, the students gaze hopefully at Thomas. Will he mime the action of throwing it back, and let them continue their imaginary game? He does so, and the Thomas once so sure he could interpret what was real, confesses himself a doubting Thomas, a humble, ignorant Thomas. The last shot seals his loss of faith: we see him in close-up, watching the mime. And on the sound track there begins the noise of a racket striking a ball, then the return, the rally. He concedes he knows nothing: they might be playing a real game, for all he could tell. Thomas has passed, it seems, from one over-simplification to another.

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Although the suspense in *Blow-Up*, admirably created but clumsily resolved, is of a murder-thriller kind unfamiliar to Antonioni fans—which is making the film a lot of friends in new quarters—the film's theme is thoroughly familiar. It is a melody already stated in the last 56 shots of *L'Eclisse*, where Antonioni's camera discovers what Thomas does in the course of *Blow-Up*—some of the unsuspected spheres of action contained in apparently familiar events. The closing sequence of *L'Eclisse* is a montage which reviews the lovers' abandoned rendezvous, the place and objects which became the touchstones of their affair: a zebra crossing, a water-butt beside a building site, a water-sprinkler that sprays a nearby park. The climax, announced by a thunderous chord on the organ, is a close-up of the street-lamp bulb that illuminates the whole scene, in the gathering dusk.

The montage stresses two things: the indifference of the objective world whirling about the lovers' own febrile activity, and its energy, like the fan which smugly whirrs behind the exhausted, quarrelling couple in the opening scene. At the end, the zebra crossing which was the prelude to a kiss becomes a trivial stage in the routine walk home of passing businessmen; the water-spray which saw the lovers' first flirtation is casually switched off by a workman; jets pass overhead; other people watch them. The décor, the props of the love affair, prostitute themselves to other actors with less passionate designs, or continue their own activity independent of human behaviour: the twig that Vittoria dropped so poignantly (as she thought) into the water-butt to punctuate a meeting, slips into the gutter as the water flows out of a hole in the butt. The final shot, the mocking energy of electricity, indicts the dissipation of human energy, while the vitality of the objective world continues to expend its energy to scientifically assessable laws.

During the montage passers-by are scrutinised in a series of increasingly magnified close-ups. The gutter and the flowing water are treated with the same intensity. What each blow-up shows is a whole new picture: each pulsing vein in an old man's cheek is allowed autonomy by the intensification of focus; details of clinging mud and leaves form new shapes of microscopic beauty. Vittoria's response to this busy, sometimes mischievous universe is, as far as one can make out, to cope. But Thomas renounces his previous smugness for a worse smugness: the luxury of despair and renunciation of responsibility.

He believed he was wedded to reality by his camera; when he discovers that reality is unfaithful to him, that he has never possessed it completely, he renounces all conjugal rights: all

reality, he meekly concedes, is appearance. Although he knows the rag students are miming their tennis match, he invents the sound of racket on ball. The way Antonioni's thesis is presented is inconsistent with both the metaphysical proposition and the physical situation. In the first place, a leap has been made between the proposition that we often settle for oversimplified explanations of an event, and the directive that all explanation is futile. Certainly, Thomas was mistaken in thinking that he had photographed a quiet afternoon; but this is not necessarily metaphysical arrogance: a telephoto lens would have solved the problem at the time, and wedded him to a more complex reality rather more satisfactorily than his nothing-is-really-real gesture at the end.

The film seems to be making the paranoiac's leap from the proposition that objective reality is largely indifferent to one's desires, which is an unobjectionable argument, to the proposition that it conspires against one. Anna's disappearance in *L'Avventura* was a mysterious one—but it permitted of certain quite specific speculations: either she drowned; or she ran away, as she had threatened to do. The absence of a conclusive solution didn't lead Sandro and Claudia to see imaginary tennis matches, or to wonder whether Anna ever existed. The same applies to *Blow-Up*. The body disappeared: well, somebody took it away. To rush to the extreme conclusion that nothing is real embraces Pirandellism, and forms a significantly different proposition to the statement that our means of observing and assessing reality are desperately limited.

If this were the gist of *Blow-Up*, there would be no need for Thomas to 'hear' the noises suggested by a student rag mime. He knows as well as we do that there is no tennis match. His camera has just unveiled to him a whole set of circumstances that his senses missed: instead of proclaiming all modes of perception invalid, which he does in the final scene, he of all people—a photographer—should not be surprised at what the camera uncovers. This is the inconsistency in the physical situation: what photographer has this kind of shock in store? As a scientist does, working in a stricter symbology than the artist, a photographer understands what a medium of communication or a mode of perception is: it is a construct, more or less fallible. And when you find it has been fallible, as Thomas does with his senses in *Blow-Up*, you do not kick the mechanism to bits and charge fuming from the laboratory. You acknowledge the error, you discover why it happened, and you set about refiring the machinery with this new information.

This is all Thomas has to do. Because he became involved in a drunken party the night before, when he reached the park the body had gone. This does not mean that the body never existed, and he can no longer trust his memory, or that the mimed tennis match is real, and he can no longer trust his senses. All it means is that he should have extracted himself from the party and pursued his objective. Thomas is blaming on the world a failure of the will. In the first place, he has mistaken an event in a public park for something other than it is; in the second place, he has allowed himself so many distractions while investigating it that the search proves fruitless. So he resigns himself to 'hearing' a mimed tennis match: it is the act of a man who avoids the truth, the act of a man who is not prepared to criticise himself.

* * *

Which brings us to why Antonioni should move from the intellectual poise of *L'Avventura* to the clumsiness of *Blow-Up*, where he has extrapolated an idea into a story without appreciating that he has changed his area of operations. And the appearance-and-reality proposition of which the film is an embodiment is not merely a tiresome cliché, but a lazy half-truth in narrative form. "All of the other films I did with my stomach, this one I did with my brain," Antonioni said recently in an interview. He used to say bad films were made with the head or the heart, good ones only with the stomach. And we are a far cry from his Chekhovian remark "I never

work from an abstraction towards a story." Antonioni claims in different ways, in different interviews (and the interviews themselves are testimony to this), that he has to preserve an area of non-articulate confrontation with his work; that the pressures of film-making make a certain avoidance of analysis essential in preserving this area of spontaneity.

I dislike being asked questions about my work, he has said, because they bring me to a level of ratiocination, whereas I prefer to work on a lower level ('livello inferiore'). Naturally, in every artist the activity must relax down into the subconscious springs of inspiration once the conscious objectives have been defined; or if not the objectives, then the framework of the piece, the broad shapes. But once the area of refusal to criticise grows too large because of arrogance, or grows too intractable because of a constant threat to it, an artist is in danger of settling for the easy choice, for the contrived and the second-rate. He lets things through.

Blow-Up is unconsciously an appeal to the worst kind of intellectual sentimentality. It is a lesson in how to take the easy way out. It could become the handbook of those words-don't-ever-really-communicate and you-can't-ever-really-know-what-I'm-feeling merchants who settle for these half-truths the moment a discussion becomes demanding, in the impermeable conviction that they are bravely confronting a more challenging and subtle reality than you. They use the limitations of perception and communication as a means of avoiding responsibility, as Thomas does in *Blow-Up*. It seems that Antonioni, too, has come to regard these limitations as an excuse rather than a challenge. *Blow-Up* is not merely an intellectual wheelchair for intellectual cripples, it propagates a moral defeatism towards the challenges of living that the film's technical expertise only renders more pernicious.

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The craftsmanship is indeed of a very high order. The self-conscious use of colour in *Deserto Rosso* has been left behind as an accessory of Giuliana's neuroticism and an experiment in the neurotic distortion of chromatic values. The art direction is splendid and the camerawork (Carlo Di Palma) relaxed. Antonioni's uniquely meticulous use of sound is in evidence. The rhythm of the film is rather disjointed at times, where scenes have obviously been cut very short, parts expanded, like Vanessa Redgrave's as the girl in the park, or visibly contracted, like Sarah Miles' as the painter's girl friend. The screen is dominated by David Hemmings as Thomas, and the contribution of the other actors is somewhat curtailed by their function in the story, which is to illustrate their insignificance in Thomas' life. Hemmings serves the story extremely well, playing Thomas both expressively and economically, and gaining our sympathy without blinding us to Thomas' indifference to the people around him.

The dialogue, tailored by Edward Bond from the Antonioni-Guerra screenplay, is convincing and unobtrusive; sometimes too unobtrusive—a line tending more to patois than to colloquialism, a delivery more private than intimate. The use of slang can become a restriction of expression, not a freedom; and on these occasions one suspects the director himself is more sinned against than sinning. For a film-maker working in a language other than his own, rhetoric is not the area of dramatic dialogue hardest to assess, but casual chat. In an effort not to betray unfamiliarity, underplaying is left unchecked. But these are rare lapses. Quite apart from its status as a uniquely authoritative debut in a foreign language, the film has a great deal to offer as entertainment, in the narrative, the performances, and the fluency of Antonioni's camera style.

Above all, the story is immensely exciting. Two scenes are unforgettable: the gradual discovery of the murder as the prints are blown up, and the midnight visit to the park. An Antonioni film where the plot is enthralling and the intellectual content banal will come as a shock to a lot of people, but it is deservedly bringing him a wider audience, since the handling of *Blow-Up* as a thriller alone merits it a special place in that genre.

Shorts & Cinemas



by David Robinson and Ian Wright

1. MONOPOLY, A LONG LOOK AND THE SHORTS PROBLEM

THERE MAY HAVE BEEN THOSE who, last November 1, looked for apocalyptic change. Some people expected that the long-sitting Monopolies Commission would produce a report which might transform the face of the film industry. In fact Wardour Street relapsed that day into a profound, and one might think relieved, silence. But however toothless its critics may think the document, it does contain at least one recommendation which cannot conceal a whiff of gunpowder, and which has demanded some diligent study from Wardour Street.

With one dissenting voice, the Commission recommended that the Rank Organisation should "discontinue its practice of giving regular weekly bookings to its own documentary films, and should book documentaries and other short films on their merits." This amounted to a frontal attack on *Look at Life*, the most profitable short film series in the country. In Rank cinemas alone, *Look at Life* was shown more than 15,600 times during 1966. When you compare this figure with the 3,110 occasions on which other short films were seen on the Rank circuit during the same period (though these films were often a bit longer than *Look at Life's* ten or eleven minutes), it is easy to see what the Monopolies Commission were concerned about.

A month after publication of the report, while the wound struck by the Commission must still have been smarting, an ill-timed Sunday press conference announced the Short Film Makers' Campaign. This pressure group (for that is what it

was) was the direct result of a book which, though it had been long in preparation, saw the light of day at this significant moment. Derrick Knight and Vincent Porter's *A Long Look at Short Films* (Pergamon Press, 12s. 6d.) is the heartfelt and lengthily researched work of two people who make their living from short films, and which, although begun independently, ended up with the official blessing of the ACTT and was published under the title of "An ACTT Report on the Short Entertainment and Factual Film."

As this suggests, the book goes well beyond the question of short films in cinemas—although it is interesting that in subsequent discussion this has generally been the main concern. Knight and Porter illustrate with a somewhat patchy show of statistical tables how things have gone from bad to worse for short film-makers in British cinemas. What they don't make quite so clear is how the last decade or so has opened up vast opportunities for individuals to work inside the television companies.

But even if their argument is somewhat one-sided, it is fascinating to see the case as it affects the circuits. Rank, and to a lesser extent ABC, rely extensively on the short films they make themselves. *Look at Life* is produced once a week. Costs have been skinned. It is a consistent product: renters, bookers, exhibitors and audience know what to expect of it. In style it is a curious hangover from the fifties—decent enough technically, but made by people who seem to be unaware that since the arrival of documentary programmes like *Panorama*

ABOVE: MAN AT WORK FOR MITHRAS FILMS' "LABOUR PARTY".

and 24 Hours audiences have acquired an appetite for something less supine. *Look at Life* subsists upon that broad breast of tolerance which the circuits mistake for enjoyment at their peril.

In short-term cash returns, *Look at Life* and ABPC's *Pathé Pictorial* are profitable as hardly any other theatrically-directed short films can be today. Their privileged access to the theatres not only nets undisclosed exhibition fees; it also earns for its makers roughly the same amount of money again from the Eady Fund, which is differentiated in favour of shorts, with the express—though often frustrated—intention of encouraging short film production. According to the circuits' critics, *Look at Life* and *Pathé Pictorial* between them take well over half of the quarter of a million or so pounds which the fund pays out annually to short films. When this is added to direct theatre receipts and to earnings abroad (the Japanese are said to have a penchant for *Look at Life*) the earnings of these rather drab little series must be handsome.

Little wonder, then, that John Davis, the Chief Executive of the Rank Organisation, chose the occasion of a special preview of an issue of *Look at Life* on the activities of the City of London, to challenge its critics: *Look at Life*, he said, would come to an end if and when the cinema-going public wishes it. . . . "Nothing in our recent experience suggests even remotely that the time has yet come."

Little wonder, either, that the short film-makers look greenly upon *Look at Life*, mopping up the Eady money whilst playing cuckoo, keeping anything else off the screens. But *Look at Life*, when all is said and done, is only one symptom of the shorts problem, which is (put in its crudest terms) that the unsponsored short film intended primarily for theatrical exhibition has become uneconomic and hence practically defunct. Shorts, Knight and Porter demonstrate, cannot be made for much under £2,000 per reel. Individual prints (with a desirable life of not more than 100 or so showings) cost, for colour, another £20 a reel over and above this. Costs have moreover continued to rise; a film that might have been made for £5,000 ten years ago may well cost £11,000 now. On the other hand, the flat rates at which shorts are booked into the cinemas have remained practically unchanged for years. The rate can, on rare occasions, be as much as £20 per week for a good West End showing; it can fall, in the provinces, to a matter of shillings, and almost pence, per week. The supporting programme's share appears to represent a mere ½-1 per cent of the gross take. Clearly it is out of the question for a short film, under normal conditions, to recoup even a fraction of its cost from theatrical showings.

Knight and Porter quote the instance of *The Insects*, an

animated film of 1964, whose returns, up to the end of 1965, were as follows:

	£
U.K. theatrical (35 mm)	6
U.K. non-theatrical (16 mm)	22
U.K. TV sales	106
Canada (TV)	115
W. Germany (cinema)	354
Netherlands (non-theatrical)	20
U.S.A. (guarantee against 50 per cent)	340
Belgium/Luxemburg	55
Scandinavia (TV)	55
East Germany (cinema)	100
Poland	100
Yugoslavia	150
C.O.I. (exclusive TV and non-exclusive, non-theatrical rights in the world excluding U.S.A., Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Japan)	200

Out of this total return of £1,623, the income of £6 from cinema exhibitions in the United Kingdom is hardly heartening.

Is the gap between the cost of films and the price they command in the cinema widened beyond repair? In trying to come to some understanding of the roots and possible resolutions of the problem, we have tried to answer two questions. Wherein lies the *value* of the short film? What measures might be taken to help close the gap between *cost* and *price*?

2. THE VALUE OF A SHORT FILM

ONE MIGHT SUPPOSE THAT the short film would actually be at a premium at a time when the old rule of the double-feature programme is being increasingly usurped by the programme composed of a single feature and 'make-up'. The most apparent reason for the revolution is the growing length of big pictures; but there are other reasons too. For one thing the double-bill is already an anachronism; the live theatre dropped the two-feature programme almost a century ago. And the wretched quality of most available second-feature material has inevitably begun to tell; a writer in the *Sheffield Telegraph* of February 8 1967 reported: "With a handful of honourable exceptions, the second feature has usually been the object of unanimous execration by cinema audiences, which is why the Sheffield committee of Uptake—the cinema's rescue operation—came out recently in favour of what the industry calls 'make-up': support comprising a number of varied short films rather than one subsidiary feature." More positive evidence of the audience's growing dislike of the second feature comes, surprisingly, from a survey conducted by Rank themselves to establish the popularity of *Look at Life*. Fifty-four per cent of the regular cinemagoers interviewed said that they preferred *Look at Life* to the second feature. Enough, one might feel, said.

As the 'make-up' programme gains ascendancy over the double-bill, its constituents—including shorts—ought logically to acquire greater importance. At least the composition of the supporting programme should matter a good deal more in the long run—to audience, exhibitor and film-maker alike—than the circuits, from their casual policies and vague market researches, would seem to admit. The film-maker's interest is obvious: the programme that precedes the main feature cannot but condition the audience's reception of it. Producers, where they are able to exercise any control over accompanying programmes, show themselves only too conscious of this. Harry Saltzman himself appears to have been responsible for the choice of supporting programmes shown with the Bond films in the West End. On release, however, United Artists seem to have had the last word and the films went round with Harold Baim travelogues. (Along with *Look at Life* and *Pathé Pictorial*, the travelogues made by Harold Baim under titles like *Basque in the Sun*, *Quay to the Tor*, and *U.K. Swings Again* are one of the rare groups of short films which have managed, thanks partly to a favourable tie-up with United Artists, to be self-supporting and even profitable.)

The level of interest of the Baim travelogues, or of average good issues of *Look at Life*, confirms that supporting programmes are devised and booked on the principle that since

STRIpteaser IN JOHN IRVIN'S "CAROUSELLA".



the shorts do not attract people into the cinema, or drive them out, they are of little commercial consequence. This is one of the more short-sighted policies of an entertainment industry given to short-term views. The dreadful desert of time between showings of the feature—when the tabs wander aimlessly to and fro and the lights go up and down to illuminate the undergrowth of old ice-cream wrappings and the kids charge up and down the aisles for change for Our bored-to-death Sales Staff in All Parts of the Theatre, and, in indifferent succession and barely attended to, *Pathé Pictorial* or the News or Mining Review or ads for the local carpet bargains amble on to the screen—must take its toll. The cumulative impression of going to the pictures weighs in succeeding weeks' decisions whether it is worth going out to see a film or staying at home with *Till Death Us Do Part*. The memory of a couple of bright or exciting or novel or funny shorts could help this impression.

* * *

"The short film," say the Short Film Campaigners, "is becoming increasingly important as a means of social, economic and educational communication." This function (why not delete the words "becoming increasingly"?) has not on the face of it much to do with the commercial theatres, where overt informational values tend to be positively resented as an impertinent intrusion on the primary business of entertainment. Since the war (when the informational film was at a premium and even such a dedicated showman as Walt Disney found it profitable as well as proper to make such a feature-length film as *Victory Through Air Power*), audiences have entirely lost the Victorian thirst to be told new things which they seemed still to keep before it.

Here of course we are brought up against the apparently contradictory experience of television, a tremendous bulk of whose output is directly informational. Week by week there is a far greater proportion of programmes on the arts, politics, history, sociology, and other subjects of identifiably 'educational' content than can be explained simply by the requirements of the Charter and the Act. Television is sufficiently in contact with its audience's tastes to suggest that these programmes must respond to a positive demand; and one asks why, if such a demand exists, the cinema should not also turn it to advantage.

The obvious answer is, of course, that the demand, though large, is still a minority one, and the circuit organisation of cinemas is too unwieldy to permit it to cater for minority tastes. The nature of television allows it to differentiate a much broader spectrum in its audiences than the commercial cinema. It is not the whole answer, though; some of television's favourite, because most successful, documentary subjects—drugs, vandalism, milder sexual and psychological themes—have clearly much wider (if possibly baser) appeals than some of the distinctly off-beat subjects selected by *Look at Life*.

* * *

Indirectly the Short Film Campaign's "training" argument has probably a greater relevance to the theatre situation:

The costs of film-making dictate that the essential training and experiment necessary to a healthy national film industry can only take place in low-budget productions, that is, short as opposed to feature films. If the British film industry is to survive with any national identity, it will depend on the talent and techniques that can be fostered in this area.

The evidence here is clear enough: at home Tony Richardson, Jack Clayton, Karel Reisz, Lindsay Anderson, John Schlesinger, Dick Lester all began their work as directors by making short films; and abroad—from Wajda and Munk to Resnais and Franju and Truffaut to Alexander Kluge—the same seems to be true.

Here again the industry risks ceding privileges, as well as responsibilities, to television by pointing to directors—Lumet, Frankenheimer, Lester again—who have come to the cinema from television training. This is to play grasshopper to television's provident ant. Apart from arguable considerations of the different disciplines of television and cinema (and there is only one reply to Sir Arthur Elton's rhetorical question, "Is *The War Game* less good on a cinema screen because made in the first place for TV? Or *The Rival World* less good on TV



A SHOT FROM GEOFFREY JONES' "SNOW".

because made for non-theatrical distribution?"), when you talk about the film-makers who have been won from television you must not forget those who have been lost to it.

Nor does the prospect of a film school relieve the industry proper from direct responsibilities in this connection of training. The final lesson in making films is making films. The real test of the great established film schools like Moscow and Lodz is the diploma films which students make in their final year. (Significantly these diploma films make up far and away the liveliest and most significant part of the considerable short film productions of the USSR and Poland.) But there is not much point in making films unless they are made for an audience. The film is an art of communication, and you cannot communicate with nobody. If there has been a single predominant weakness in the productions of the British Film Institute's Experimental Production Fund (now the BFI Production Board), it has been that the films have too often seemed not to be speaking to anyone, but mumbling to themselves. The importance of the short film in developing new talent would seem to give the feature industry a sufficiently large stake in its future to counter fears that a better commercial break for the short could only be at the financial expense of features.

3. HOW CAN THE COST/PRICE GAP BE CLOSED?

A. By Cutting Costs

OUTSIDE THE BIG PRODUCTION organisations, who have their own methods, there may well be more effective methods of streamlining shorts production. More rational company groupings, for instance, of the numerous tiny production units which nest in office tenements around Dean Street and Soho Square could combine strength and reduce overheads. It appears too that a great deal of time and effort is squandered uneconomically by the necessity for producers to hawk their own films about renters. There is probably scope for a centralised selling service which might well be as welcome to renters and exhibitors as to film-makers.

Presumably Knight and Porter's proposal for a National Film Centre working in conjunction with a National Film Board would fulfil this as well as other functions. Meanwhile Derek Hill's Short Film Service is a useful first step towards providing a central service agency. With the existing shorts set-up it is difficult for such an organisation to get very far off the ground; but the potential is obvious. Already Hill can claim to have whipped up all-sources income for short films

to between £200 and £500 per running-time minute. One can foresee developments in several directions: a system of 'packaging' groups of shorts might, for instance, overcome renters' and exhibitors' not unreasonable reluctance to handle films which, however attractive in themselves, run for an awkward three or four minutes. In general, the exhibition end of the industry might look more favourably on shorts if some of the work of handling and accounting were taken out of their hands.

B. By Raising Prices

We have already suggested (a) that the circuits underestimate the commercial value of supporting programmes, which rests not in direct box-office appeal, but in the less tangible, long-term effects of programming policies; and (b) that the feature industry has a stake in the well-being of the short film industry. The inference here is that it is not altogether altruistic to look to exhibitors and feature film producers to agree to a more realistic cut of the cinema take for supporting programmes.

There is a curious anomaly here between the supporting programme and the second feature. Although—setting aside the traditional, if possibly mythical attachment of the audience to the double bill—one might suppose that the second feature had not very much greater box-office value than the supporting programme of shorts, the second feature can bargain with the big picture for a percentage of the gross take, while the supporting programme is paid for at flat rates that are often derisory. In the case of double-feature programmes this leads to an absurd, and one would suppose perilous, situation. Good second-feature material is so hard to come by that any slight merit can bargain high, demanding percentages up to co-feature rates. The first-feature distributor is thus likely to be faced with the suicidal, frying-pan-and-fire dilemma of choosing between giving up a substantial part of his income, or harnessing his film with another that may be so bad as to antagonise his audience.

C. By a Redistribution of Subsidy

A great part of the answer to the shorts problem must lie in the Eady Fund. One difficulty in reallocation of this fund, however, is that it is itself somewhat anomalous. Its income is derived from a levy on the sale of cinema tickets, which is enforced by law and collected by the Customs and Excise. However, the proceeds of this tax do not go into general revenue, but direct into the British Film Fund, which is administered by a non-profit-making company responsible to the Board of Trade. It is then paid out to film producers who qualify as British, on the basis of financial returns made to the distributors from the cinemas. The more your film takes at the box-office, the more the fund pays you. It is a complicated, secretive system, expensive to operate but successful, along with the quota system, in attracting a large amount of American capital into British film production.

Naturally the industry does not care to view Eady money either as a tax on the one hand or as a subsidy on the other. There is a strong feeling that it is 'industry money'—rather as motorists tend to feel that the proceeds of Road Fund licences and the tax on petrol belong to the motoring community rather than to the wider public use. But the industry has agreed that certain causes (children's films, low budget films, newsreels, short films) should be treated advantageously by the Eady Fund; and it seems a short and reasonable step from paying a 'times 2½' award to shorts to applying the same amount of money to encourage short film-making rather more efficiently. 'Efficiently' is important, for in Wardour Street there is an understandable horror of shoring up wasters and handing out a dole to indifferent film-makers who believe the world owes them a living. By comparison with twenty years ago life is difficult. But if short films are needed for any of the reasons given above (programming, as an art form, training), then everyone should consider (as the Film Producers' Association is doing at the moment) how the Eady subsidy can be applied best.

It is important to make a distinction between four sorts of

film: the brilliant film which wins festival prizes and critical approval but which would send most people off in search of ice-cream; the equally good film which does have mass appeal (sometimes cartoons, whose short running time alone makes them unattractive to exhibitors); the film of solid worth which most people would like, which is well made, and deserves to be promoted; and lastly films which fall into none of these categories.

With these rather rough divisions in mind, it is possible to devise sets of criteria by which to judge short films. One such parlour game might run like this: you have 100 points to give away, 20 shall go to assess the subject, 20 to the treatment, 10 to the film's technical qualities, 30 to the interest you think it will hold for the average audience, and a final 20 shall be awarded by the juror on the basis of his personal response to the film.

Coming out of the parlour, is there any reason (apart from the difficulty of composing a jury) why twelve people should not be able to assess short films—all short films produced in Britain—using similar criteria? Their object should be to place them in roughly three categories: films scoring more than 80 would get three stars; more than 60, two stars; and less than 60 only one star. The subsidy from Eady Money could then be applied proportionately. One-star films might be paid $\times 1$, two-star $\times 2$, and three-star $\times 3$. The multiplier could even be varied. But to this system an imperative qualification should be added. Exhibitors of two and three-star films could be encouraged as well. Production and distribution are after all two sides of the same coin. There could be an added payment from such a fund to exhibitors of $\times 1$ for two-star films and of $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$ for three-stars.

How might such a hypothetical exercise work in practice? Suppose that the fee for a film were, say, £10 (it makes no difference if this is a fixed fee, as now, or a percentage of the gross take). In the case of an exhibitor showing a one-star film he could pay £10 and the distributor could collect £10 + £4 Eady money (presuming Eady payments at 40 per cent), a total of £14 to split with the producer. A two-star film, however, could cost the exhibitor only £6, the distributor collecting his £6 plus his $\times 1$ from Eady (£4) and the producer's $\times 2$ from Eady (£8), making a total of £18. A three-star film could do even better: the exhibitor would pay £4, the distributor would get that and £18 from Eady (the exhibitor's $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$ and the producer's $\times 3$), adding up to £22.

The figures are hypothetical and the factors would have to be juggled to fit the amount of money in the fund for distribution. The advantage of some such system as we are envisaging is that it cuts off the present automatic $\times 2\frac{1}{2}$ to all shorts which get screentime and would curtail the large amounts being paid out to *Look at Life*. However, *Look at Life* would not be excluded from earning one, two, or even three stars and reaping the benefit. It would be competing in an open market for the subsidy—which presumably is what the Monopolies Commission had in mind.

* * *

Hand in hand with a grading system there should be a prize system as well (as there might also be for features). Unlike the award of stars, the prizes should not necessarily take into account popular appeal. They should be prestigious, out-and-out quality awards. They should be given for general excellence, originality of treatment, and for efforts to expand the frontier of short film production. If possible they should be given to enable the people who get them to set up another film. It is conceivable that a film that gets a quality award would not have received more than a single star in the grading: plainly all quality films are not for foisting on an unwilling market.

In the first year of operation there would probably be few quality awards: the resulting surplus could be applied either to the British Film Institute's Production Fund or to any similar fund to help young directors at the outset of their careers with modest grants. The amount of the prize money available for quality awards for shorts would probably vary from year to year; but there should be at least one large prize, say of £15,000, at least five of £6,000 and ten of £2,000. Obviously they should not be awarded if the eligible films do

not reach a given standard. The jury would make awards by vote.

The thorniest question of all is the composition of the jury itself. France, Germany, and Italy, all of which have juries to judge films, have found their constitution a continuing source of difficulty. There are a lot of people to satisfy and interests which expect to be represented. In Britain the problem could be hardest of all. Our film industry has always resisted outside interference in its commercial decisions. Industry pressure appears on every page of our film legislation, with a few civil servants at the Board of Trade and a handful of independent members on the Cinematograph Films Council left to uphold the public interest.

Now that all this legislation is due for review before 1970, there is a chance to see that public interest can have its say. For this reason the jury as we envisage it should be mostly a consumer affair. In films this is a revolutionary notion, but there is no reason why the industry should suffer in the long run. Indeed there is reason to believe that the industry is much more conservative than its customers and that is why it tends to lose them, as Operation Uptake is now discovering. Bearing in mind that any jury would be bound by the criteria already mentioned (subject, treatment, popular interest, etc.) it might be as well to take the majority from amongst professional film critics nominated by the industry (CEA, KRS, BFPA etc.), and the rest as the industry's direct representatives (including Unions). Jury members should serve for not more than a year at a time and the same jury would grade films as would award quality prizes.

4. SHORTS WORTH SHOWING

IT WOULD BE THE MADDEST optimism to suppose that if by some combination of these methods we were able to find place in the commercial theatres for worthwhile shorts, and more economic means to make them, the floodgates would straightway open. No one can pretend that there is a great pile-up of British short films only waiting for screen space. A thorough search produces barely half a dozen short films of any real theatrical potential; and of these most are disqualified for one reason or another (Bob Godfrey's popular cartoon films tend to be of awkward length; John Irvin's commercially attractive *Carousella* cannot get a certificate, and so on). The immediately acceptable material, like British Transport Films' *Snow*, has been reasonably well shown; and when Fox buys, rather

expensively, a poor thing like Mike Sarne's *Road to St. Tropez* you are almost persuaded that the trade is trying too hard. If our proposed reallocation of the Eady Fund were to come into effect next month, the assessors would have nothing to Look at but Life.

In the longer term, Derek Hill, who is perhaps more closely and widely in touch with what British short film-makers are actually doing than anyone else, waves a McCarthyesque blank sheet of paper and says, with McCarthyesque definition: "I can name you forty-three British directors who could make the shorts..." And he can, even though they are not likely all to be of the same calibre. He names John Irvin, Bob Godfrey, Dick Williams, Hugh Raggett, Tom Scott Robson, William Bray, Roger Graef, Mamoun Hassan, Malcolm Craddock, Bernice Rubens, Henry Herbert, Dai Vaughan, Caterina Arvat and Anthony West, Allan King, James Clark, David Naden, David Gladwell, John Ponsford, Nick Gifford, Lionel Ngakane, George Dunning, James Scott, Peter Davis, Staffan Lamm, Robert Vas, Walter Lassally... and more. And there is a senior generation who might still be retained by or brought back to the short film by more encouraging conditions—Lindsay Anderson, Paul Dickson, Guy Brenton.

With not unreasonable optimism one might hope that there is here a fund of imagination and talent, if opportunity arose, to develop the potential of the short film medium. However little evidence there is at home at present to demonstrate the point, the short film is as individual and varied a medium as the short story and the essay. It is not only the informational film, the straight documentary, the travelogue, the cartoon joke. There is an enormous range of subjects which are simply not suitable for feature length films. Offhand you can think of *Time out of War*, *Terminus*, *Heureux Anniversaire*, *Le Ballon Rouge*, *Thursday's Children*, *Le Poulet*. Conversely it is all too easy to think of feature films whose subjects would have been a good deal better treated as shorts. None of these are necessarily things that television can do just as well either. Work for television must conform not only to specific requirements of pace and attack, but is also likely to be pummelled or racked to fit a 25-minute or 50-minute standard. If we have at present little or no evidence of this potential richness of the short film medium it is largely because there is no outlet for it: one wonders what the literary situation would be if the only outlet for writers were novels (180 to 240 pages only), instructional leaflets and advertising copy.

(Continued on page 105)

END CREDIT TITLE FOR "A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM" BY RICHARD WILLIAMS, A FILM-MAKER EQUALLY SUCCESSFUL COMMERCIALY (CREDIT TITLES, COMMERCIALS) AND IN HIS OWN HIGHLY INDIVIDUAL CARTOON WORK.



IN THE PICTURE

The B.F.I. Award, 1966

OZU (TOKYO STORY), SATYAJIT RAY (*The World of Apu*), Antonioni (*L'Avventura*), Olmi (*Il Posto*), Rivette (*Paris Nous Appartient*), Resnais (*Muriel*), Kozintsev (*Hamlet*), Godard (*Pierrot le Fou*): these have been the recipients since 1958 of the British Film Institute Award—the Sutherland Trophy—for the maker of “the most original and imaginative film introduced by the National Film Theatre during the year.” The 1966 Award goes to André Delvaux for his first feature, *The Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short*, a film sadly neglected by most critics both at the London Film Festival and during its subsequent brief run at the Academy Cinema Club. Reviewed elsewhere in this issue, this Flemish film—with its extraordinary confrontation of beauty and horror it could only have come from the land of Bosch and Breughel—puts a new country and a new director on the film-making map: André Delvaux, born in Louvain in 1926, hitherto known only as admirer of Resnais, instructor at the Belgian equivalent of IDHEC, and maker of shorts, including a TV series on the Polish cinema.

Coupled with the main award is a special mention to another neglected film, Peter Lorre's *Der Verlorene*. Made in Germany in 1951, roughly handled at the time but since stoutly defended by Lotte Eisner, this strange and haunting film, which reaches back over twenty years in style and emotion to *M* and its dark vision of the German malaise, makes one regret that Lorre was never able to direct another film. It is a unique document, containing what is arguably Lorre's greatest performance, and deserves wider showing in this country.

Pour la Suite du Canada

AS CANADA CELEBRATES its hundredth birthday with year-long festivities and the Montreal world's fair, Expo '67, Canadian film-makers, off to a bouncy if shaky start, are lusting for the Big Time and running after the most elusive of celluloid trappings—a resounding international hit. Although it has hardly made an impression yet beyond the festival and art film world, the Canadian phenomenon is significant: Canadian films go beyond consumer aesthetics and are largely political and moral mirrors of a nation in transition.

Seen from within, the most important result of the first crop of features is that it has stopped, or at least slowed down, the brain drain to Hollywood. The 'stone age', according to film-makers like Don Owen and his contemporaries in and out of the National Film Board (of late, mostly out), was the epoch when Allan Dwan, Mark Robson and Edward Dmytryk trekked south to become 'Canadian-born' Hollywood directors. Yesterday was the time when Norman Jewison, Arthur Hiller and Harvey Hart graduated from Toronto television to the U.S. film industry. Today is here-and-now movie-making—with bare hands if necessary. Today, the hint of an alternative to a career in the U.S. industry exists in North America, although it is hard to see how success must not somehow lead to Hollywood.

The new Canadians have by now exposed enough raw stock for a first appraisal; and it seems a certain 'grace' has saved many of them from the pot-and-perversion wave of the New York alternative. “Emotions in the Anglo-Saxon style, without infinite shadings, but with strong feelings and unconscious cruelty,” wrote *Cahiers du Cinéma* of 25-year-old David Secter's *Winter Kept Us Warm*. One feels that tomorrow won't even be a Sidney Furie making it via London following indifference in his native Toronto, but two or three 'auteurs' emerging with strong personalities and perhaps this 'gratia canadiana' that still has to be defined. One feels that the centre of gravity is migrating and the criterion of Big Time is becoming irrelevant.

French Canadians have had a head start since Gilles Groulx and Michel Brault impressed the 1962 Cannes Festival with their unpretentious *cinéma vérité* technique. The political effervescence of Quebec, with its secessionist movement and Anglophobia, gave the Montreal cineastes the added edge of livelier and more aggressive story material. French Canadian production, at present suffering a hangover from its first success, is dominated by two themes: political separatism, and boy-becomes-man slices of autobiographical life.

Le Révolutionnaire, a 16 mm. 90-minute film, is the best of the politically toned first features, a little picture that divides its audience into enthusiasts for its Godardian irreverence and objectors who find it totally atrocious. The picture is by 25-year-old Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, who with a small inheritance has since made two more 16 mm. features and a first 35 mm. production. Like TV director Claude Fournier, whom François Truffaut found the most promising of the Montreal roster, Lefebvre is not a product of the National Film Board, while other slightly older film-makers are all mutants from the NFB.

Brault, 38, who started *cinéma vérité* by accident with the 1958 documentary *Les Raquetteurs* and went on to work with Jean Rouch on *Chronique d'un Été*, and Groulx, 36, who successfully fused *cinéma vérité* and *cinéma de fiction* in his NFB feature *Le Chat dans le Sac* in 1965, are the veterans and 'names' of the Montreal wave. Also belonging to the Establishment are Gilles Carle, 36, maker of *La Vie Heureuse de Léopold Z*, the first comedy, and Pierre Patry, 43, author of *Trouble-Fête*, a schoolboy-in-revolt study which was the first commercial success at home.

These four have all now left the NFB. This renowned organisation, always the envy of U.S. academic circles, was set up 26 years ago as a wartime propaganda tool, with headquarters in an Ottawa barn and John Grierson as its first president. The NFB was in the thick of *cinéma vérité*, first because the demands from television for new material gave English-speaking creators such as Roman Kroitor, Wolf Koenig and Colin Low a chance to practise their ideas in a half-hour series which they called *Candid Eye*; second because creative boss Tom Daly backed the shaky essays of Groulx and Co. The Board also produced, though reluctantly, such first features of its French-speaking rebels as *Le Chat dans le Sac*, which contained not only the love scenes de rigueur, but also snide political (separatist) comment. “Your taxes finance revolt in Quebec—but it's all on film,” was a *Toronto Star* headline last spring.

MICHEL BRAULT'S "ENTRE LA MER ET L'EAU DOUCE": CLAUDE GAUTHIER AND GENEVIEVE BUJOLD.



The virus struck the English section, and Don Owen, on a routine shooting trip to Toronto and in a calculated breach of discipline, expanded his 30-minute assignment and returned to the NFB's Montreal headquarters with his own feature *Nobody Waved Goodbye*. By its very nature, however, the Board remains a government agency, and it has lately pulled back to more conventional production. In the documentary field it remains unchallenged. NFB short film bookings have increased by 40 per cent in the last five years, particularly in the U.S., where over 4,000 prints are marketed a year, mostly to product-starved TV networks and stations.

Nobody Waved Goodbye remains the best-known Canadian film abroad. This examination of youth in revolt, shot in and out of Toronto cityscapes, was given British and U.S. distribution and enjoyed good reviews and fair runs. Owen's second, *Donna and Gail*, another enquiry into youth, has been less successful. Sectar's second is *The Offering*, the story of a romance between a member of the touring Peking Opera and a Canadian stagehand. Shot last autumn in Toronto for a reported \$50,000, it stars Kee Fawn, a part-time model, as the Chinese visitor.

But younger newcomers are pressing the Owens and Sectors. At the NFB, Christopher Nutter, 19, has made *No Reason to Stay*, a story (his own) of a high school drop-out. In one angry surrealistic sequence, the boy storms through every level of bureaucracy, right up to the Prime Minister's office, to announce that he's quitting school. Bruce Mackay, 22, a folk-singer turned NFB film-maker, planned to enter a mental institution in order to make a documentary on mental rehabilitation. His approach is implied in his working title: "Bringing Them Back Home—To What?"

A conclusion is far from self-evident. A Canadian breakthrough is as likely as it is unlikely, and the answer will depend a great deal on foreign reaction to the next slate of films from Groulx, Owen, Lefebvre and Sectar, as well as on the mechanics of Canadian financing and federal subsidy.

The Liberal administration of Lester Pearson turned the first sod of a Canadian film industry last summer with the creation of a \$10 million Film Development Corporation. Meanwhile, Canadian money is active in film outside Canada. Seven Arts, which bought into Warner Brothers recently, is a Canadian Corporation; Allied Artists is backed by hefty Canadian investments; and a project like *Fahrenheit 451* was a Canadian venture, scheduled to be made in futuristic Toronto, until Universal came in and decided it should roll under British (read Eady Plan) aegis.

Which brings us back to the inescapable fact that what is needed is a solid success. Just as the Mexican film industry—to limit the criteria to a North American context—could be revived on the strength of one or two resounding international hits, so Canadian film-making only needs a spark to burst into perhaps fascinating fireworks.

AXEL MADSEN

Paris

IN LONDON, I'M TOLD, the new Chaplin film found the critics solidly massed against it. In Paris *A Countess from Hong Kong*, if not an outstanding popular success, was at least one of those films everyone talks about.

"It would have been nice to be able to contradict the harsh words of our English friends," wrote Louis Chauvet in *Figaro*,



CATHERINE DENEUE IN BUNUEL'S "BELLE DE JOUR".

"but with the best will in the world . . . it can't be done. A double disappointment." Pierre Billard (*L'Express*) was no less incisive: "The film stays in port, firmly anchored at the quay of boredom . . . Chaplin misfires this time. Let's hope it doesn't undermine the wonderful image of himself that he has left us." Robert Chazal (*France-Soir*), wondering how Charlie could have made such a vertiginously empty film, succinctly headed his review "La Ruée vers le Zéro."

But there were fiery partisans on the other side. "What a lesson in cinema Chaplin offers his contemporaries" (Claude Garson, in *L'Aurore*); "Bravo, Charlie, that's cinema" (Samuel Lachize, *L'Humanité*); "I love Chaplin's film, I laughed till I cried" (Claude Brulé, *Candide*). For Michel Aubriant (*Paris-Presse*) it's "a dazzling, tender, ironic, romantic comedy of love."

Such panegyrics, it's true, weren't backed up by much in the way of solid argument. Hesitantly, Jean de Baroncelli (*Le Monde*) wondered whether the finesse, the subtlety and the elegant melancholy which he thought he detected, all those multiple echoes of the old Chaplin charm, were really to be credited to the film, or might merely be imagined on the strength of past admiration. To ask the question is already to give the answer. To rediscover emotion it may be necessary "to leave neither one's heart nor one's memories in the cloak-room." But isn't it rather Chaplin who has left his sense of humour there? In the final analysis—to quote *Les Echos*—"The film demands neither such extravagant praise nor such execration. If Chaplin hadn't signed it, it would take a quick dive into obscurity."

Meanwhile, among films just opened or shortly to open in Paris, there are the two new Godards, Robbe-Grillet's splendid *Trans-Europ-Express*, Malle's *Le Voleur*, Buñuel's *Belle de Jour*, Chabrol's ambitious *Le Scandale*, Jessua's *Jeu de Massacre*, Marguerite Duras' first film *La Musica*. Not to mention Tati's *Playtime*, which has got lost in a fuss of detail, or Rivette's still banned *La Religieuse*.

Without allowing for surprises, there are a dozen films worth watching for out of some eighty due for release. It looks as though French production is holding steady, since a first list of films produced during 1966 lists about the same number (85) as in the previous year. One notes a greater number of 100 per cent French productions (41 against 30 in 1965); more in colour (51, of which 34 are in Scope); and one salutes the first timid steps in Anglo-French co-production (*Fahrenheit 451* and *Made-moiselle*). All something to fill the cinemas, which have recorded a further decline in audience attendance for 1966, in spite of some record returns (Gérard Oury's *La Grande Vadrouille*) which sustain the dreams of our several hundred producers.

But what cinemas? In *Film Français* last January one could read a sale advertisement for the Alhambra ("complete furnishings and equipment for 2,500-seat cinema"). The Normandie on the Champs-Élysées, one of the big Paris cinemas with more than 1,800 seats, is to be converted into two smaller halls, only one of them for films. Of the 6,605 cinemas existing in France in 1961, 6,240 now remain. The decrepit local flea-pits, with their battered seats, dim projection and inaudible sound, are being sold for supermarkets or parking lots. Meanwhile, there's compensation in the opening, especially in the Latin Quarter, of some attractive new art houses which are drawing student crowds. In some streets around the Sorbonne, it's hard to tell which queue belongs to which cinema. In Rue M. le Prince, a new cinema 'Les 3 Luxembourg' has just opened, with three 200-seater theatres one on top of the other, all served by an automated projection box. Others will soon follow: Studio Gît le Coeur, Mayfair, Chelsea, Village, Studio Alpha, etc. Soon there'll be more cinemas than colleges in the Latin Quarter. And the celebrated Studio des Ursulines, the temple of the avant-garde founded in 1926 by Armand Tallier, has just been completely renovated after 41 years. Should one shed a melancholy tear for the past? I don't think so.

The cinema's future need not rest solely with the art houses, for all their dynamism (there are now 46 in Paris and 65 in the suburbs and provinces). Experience shows that when an old-fashioned local cinema takes the trouble to modernise itself, with new standards of comfort, new technical equipment, and first-run films, its audience stops sulking, switches off the television set, and heads back to the cinema round the corner.

GILLES JACOB

Tours Festival

UNHAMPERED BY HIGH COSTS to recoup, if the director of short films cannot indulge in a few wild plunges—who on earth can? Old hands at this festival of shorts were eager to palliate a newcomer's qualms: this was not a vintage year. Each had his own explanation, but a figure could soon be seen cringing in the carpet: it appears that the town authorities, galled by the violence and polemics of experimental films shown in recent years, had exerted enough pressure to 'tone down' the pre-selection to suit local taste. Most of the films in competition reflected a prudent conformity; indeed, the only new and exciting works seen were among those kept out of the running.

Not a trend was discernible. *Cinéma-vérité* did seem out—what was in? Certainly not the prize winners, none of which broke any ground. Given the quality of the films competing, they constituted a fair choice. Documentary—Juan Buñuel's *Calanda* (France); Story—Guillemot's *Dialectique* (France); Animation—Brdecka's *Lurking in the Forest* (Czechoslovakia). *Calanda* turns Buñuel fils' lens on the town where Buñuel père was born; all of the inhabitants beat drums without halt for 24 hours during Holy Week—and what a properly deafening, raw-knuckled cradle song for the author of *Viridiana* it makes! *Dialectique* did contain the best dialogue: it was written by Plato. We follow two duck hunters in a marsh near Mont St. Michel. They peel bananas, change socks and fall into quicksand. All the while, one of them spouts paragraph after paragraph about the structure of society, cribbing through much of *The Republic*, to his silent friend who merely grunts assent. If pointless, *Dialectique* intrigues up to a point; but it lasts half an hour, and well before half of that, one sides with the quicksand.

Lurking in the Forest is of peculiar beauty, built with un-peculiar bricks. Brdecka has worked an odd magic with gouaches inspired by a simple folk song. This superbly kitschy Douanier Rousseau toy theatre Valentine-card tragedy is beautifully designed by Frantisek Braun; I think it is the only deeply moving animated film I have ever seen.

Tom Scott Robson's *Low Water* (G.B.) received a prize for First Film. The interesting material (the pariah-istic world of sea-coal miners) is rather cheaply dramatised. Canada made a good showing with Josef Reeve's *Judoka*, a crisp account of a Canadian who finds spiritual fulfilment in Japan. Reeve is a director to note; and master judo in slow motion is one of the most galvanically mesmerising things imaginable to watch.

Philippe Durand's *Les Chats* communicates the first sparks which fly when lonely man and lonely lady meet. Its charm and humour are uncountable: suffice it to say that Durand is a cinéaste of strong flair whose film should have run—and won. The revelation of the festival was Ricardo



RICARDO LEVI'S "CIRCLES", SHOWN OUT OF COMPETITION AT TOURS.

Levi's *Circles* (also out of competition), first film of a young Spanish architect, an exquisite and haunting labour of love, banned in Spain. In a white room, whose sole furnishing is a white bed, a young woman and a man in intermittently white clothing gyrate through strange rituals of apprehension. This hermetic film, unforgettable, and coolly controlled, is subtly erotic, without the occurrence of anything overtly 'sexy'. Its statement seems to lie in its texture—a neo-classic plastic resolution of the woman's unresolved despair.

ELLIOTT STEIN

Ivory Coast

AUGUST, IN THE IVORY COAST, is the season of the 'little rains'. It is also a period of intense merry-making, of Independence Day festivities, of jazz and jerk. I found myself in the Northern town of Bouaké, with five others, to conduct a youth session which has become an annual feature ever since a French Jesuit decided, some six years ago, to provide young Africans on holiday with a few cultural activities. He is aided in this task by well-wishers, and actively supported by the French Ministry of Co-Operation.

My job for the sessions consisted essentially of presenting films, screening them, and conducting debates on selected themes. After much wrangling and patience I managed to secure some of the films I had asked for; though there were voices of doubt, and some of dissent, from people familiar with local taste who hinted at the futility of my efforts to thrust on tender African sensibilities such 'hideous and modern stuff'. Cornered in the precarious position of feigning indulgence without being provocative, my dubious choice finally fell on programmes which included *A Bout de Souffle* and *Pather Panchali* among the features, along with *Toute la Mémoire du Monde*, and several Chaplin shorts.

The audience consisted mainly of high-school and college students: an audience at once attentive and curious, charmingly naive when it came to debating, sensitive to

condescension and with a back-thumping sense of humour. For the first few days, my handling of them was confused. I had been warned to be simple and direct and to avoid abstract terms. (Young Africans adore long, lovely words and I remember a particularly riotous ovation for my 'post-synchronisation!') Then there was the embarrassing difficulty of sorting out names and faces—the more so because they even had similar names, Kofi or Kwame or Konnan, each standing for a day of the week. So you finally strained your nerves to calm down Kwame (Sunday), son of Tuesday and Friday, stoutly defending Michel Poiccard, while Kofi (Saturday), son of Monday and Wednesday, was shouting him down and emotionally favouring Patricia.

Pather Panchali was an unmistakable flop. Ray's prodigious poetic intuition was lost on them, and the film's snail-like pace, its lack of adventure and action, was not at all, as some of them remarked, 'digne des Indes'. They had always heard of flying horses and elephants, of leather purses which never ceased to be laden with cash, and of dark forests where strange men, naked and ash-covered, changed humans into animal form. One charming 18-year-old admitted that she didn't quite grasp my reference to neo-realism, but it was her firm opinion that *Pather Panchali* was far from reflecting Indian reality.

They aren't really to blame for their ignorance; among other things, the culprit is evidently the base and mediocre kind of Indian films screened by the dozen here, as in the rest of Africa, films which not only sustain but add to the bewilderment. There is a regular industry in India catering to African and Arab markets, doling out films with cliché-ridden plots, songs and dances, and using names of popular Indian stars for faces that I, for one, never came across on Indian screens.

A Bout de Souffle was the astounding success of the session. The frankness, the private jokes, the action and above all the slang in the dialogue fascinated them, and they didn't seem to encounter much difficulty with the film's rhythm. Intuitively,

they reacted to Godard's vision of French youth. More than four hundred young people saw *A Bout de Souffle*, the army officers stationed in Bouaké asked for a screening, and the town's administrative élite joined in. After every screening the boys had taken to imitating Belmondo, with his inevitable frown and cigarette, and his "Salut, fils!"

But *A Bout de Souffle* was important for another reason. For the first time these young Africans had a more intimate glimpse of Paris, "la ville de nos rêves," and a few were positively disconcerted. They had all along imagined France to be one huge city, lined with extensive parks, where everyone owned a house, a car, and a transistor. I was pelted with questions about the young cinema and its new techniques. After the storm had withered away, there was one final note of unanimous accord: that the new cinema in the Ivory Coast ought to have at least one "Godard noir," one African film-maker who will speak out his heart without succumbing to compromise. *Pourquoi pas?*

The Chaplin shorts were naturally a triumph, with little children, bare-breasted mothers carrying babies on their backs, and handsome old village chieftains reeling with laughter at Charlot's antics. Since the films had no dialogue, I was forced to intervene with occasional comments—explanations of what a count was, or what spaghetti was and how one ate it.

Not content with seeing films, the audience posed a series of questions. How does a spaceman fly and how does he jump out of his aeroplane? How does Maciste twist and break iron bars? How is it that in a film I saw last week an actress dies, and this same actress reappears as young and beautiful as ever in a film I saw yesterday? Are they trying to fool us or is it magic?

My answers provoked much laughter, but I had the impression that there were still lingering doubts, and that behind all the cheering there was a trace of sadness. I had quite brutally snatched away the cherished element of wonder.

African cinema by Africans themselves is still a rarity, and attempts at feature films have proved to be difficult, technically dissatisfying, and aesthetically rather nervous. The young cineastes who are tackling the medium with much courage and enthusiasm are mainly working in television and documentary. But African film-makers are acutely aware that they cannot permanently tolerate the décor of their continent being used for the exploits of Tarzan, the tempestuous love affairs of white hunters on safari, or even the ethnologists' expeditions to unravel the mysteries of the Black Man. They are more exigent now, demanding a profounder comprehension of their rich and neglected culture. Even Jean Rouch, who has done outstanding work in and around the Abidjan region, was looked on as a white intermediary imposing on the Africans his own idea of Africa, though his *La Pyramide Humaine*, about day-to-day relationships between black and white children at a local school, evoked much admiration. In Dakar, I heard about the excellent work that Paulin Vieyra and Blaise Senghor are putting up for Senegal's Cinematographic Service. Another talented Senegalese film-maker, Ousmane Sembene, won the 1965 Prix Vigo for his *La Noire de...* These young film-makers, most of them graduates of I.D.H.E.C., the Paris film school, are on the move, and it will not be long before we see an authentic African cinema.

DILIP PADGAONKAR

Cinestud 67

OPENING CINESTUD 67, Amsterdam's third international festival of student-made films, Jan Nemec spoke passionately of his "Utopian dream to organise, at any rate on a European scale, some cultural foundation, in short a source of cash to make possible—irrespective of the wishes or programmes of producers or governments—the emergence of creative work, of purely cinematic expression, freed from the dictates of money, profit or primitive ideology." But, ironi-

cally, it was American professionalism and wit that set the tone of Cinestud's screenings, from the deft animation of Eliot Noyes' *Clay to The Season*, an ebullient satire on the commercial exploitation of Christmas in California.

Altogether there were 157 entries from 28 countries, and in addition a thousand local students crowded into the Kriterion Cinema to see a midnight selection of Dutch underground movies, which included some outstandingly funny and inventive work by Wim van der Linden. The Grand Prix for fictional films was awarded to *Partyzantka*, a nightmarish tale of revenge that managed to survive quite comfortably without sound accompaniment, while another Polish production, a genial, sardonic account of Kirk Douglas's visit to Lodz last year, took the Grand Prix for a documentary.

British entries were meagre and none of them impressed the jury. For the lesson of Cinestud 67 was surely that fine facilities can help considerably to make a modest gag or idea look good, and that without the support of an official film school (or of a series of wealthy universities, as in the U.S.A.), a student will find it difficult to compete in international company. Cinestud 67 entertained fifty foreign guests and, with English as the official language, there were extramural meetings and discussions in progress daily. When it became known that Nemec had been persuaded by a young Dutch company, Scorpio, to shoot and edit a film in the six remaining days of the festival, the entire affair seemed to be more than justified.

PETER COWIE

In Production

ANTHONY HARVEY: Follows *Dutchman* with *John and Mary*, from the novel by Mervyn Jones about love in the 1960s.

SETH HOLT: *People Who Make No Noise Are Dangerous*. Script by Meade Roberts from the thriller *The Eliminator* by Andrew York; with Richard Johnson, Sylvia Syms. Amicus for United Artists.

RICHARD LESTER: *Me and the Arch-Kook Petulia*, love story from a novel by John Haase, to be shot on location in San Francisco. With George C. Scott and Julie Christie. For Warner Brothers.

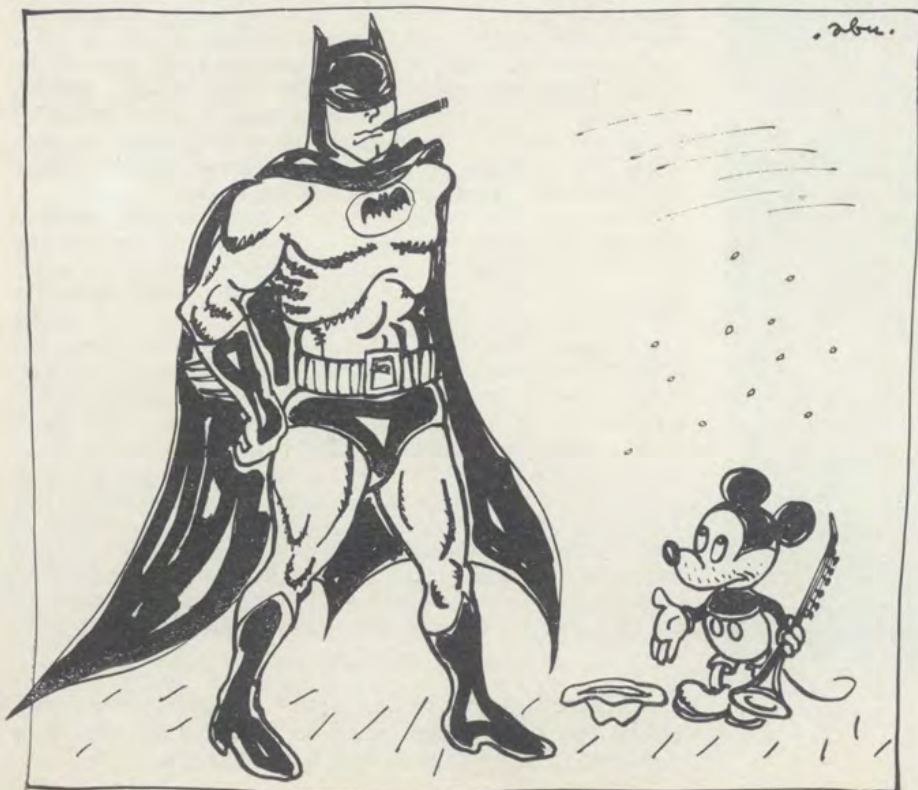
JOSEPH LOSEY: Planning to film Roger Vailland's novel *The Trout*, in a Harold Pinter adaptation. Anglo-French cast may include Dirk Bogarde, Simone Signoret.

ANTHONY MANN: *A Dandy in Aspic*, from first novel by Derek Marlowe about secret agents in London and Berlin. With Laurence Harvey, Tom Courtenay, Mia Farrow, Harry Andrews. For Columbia.

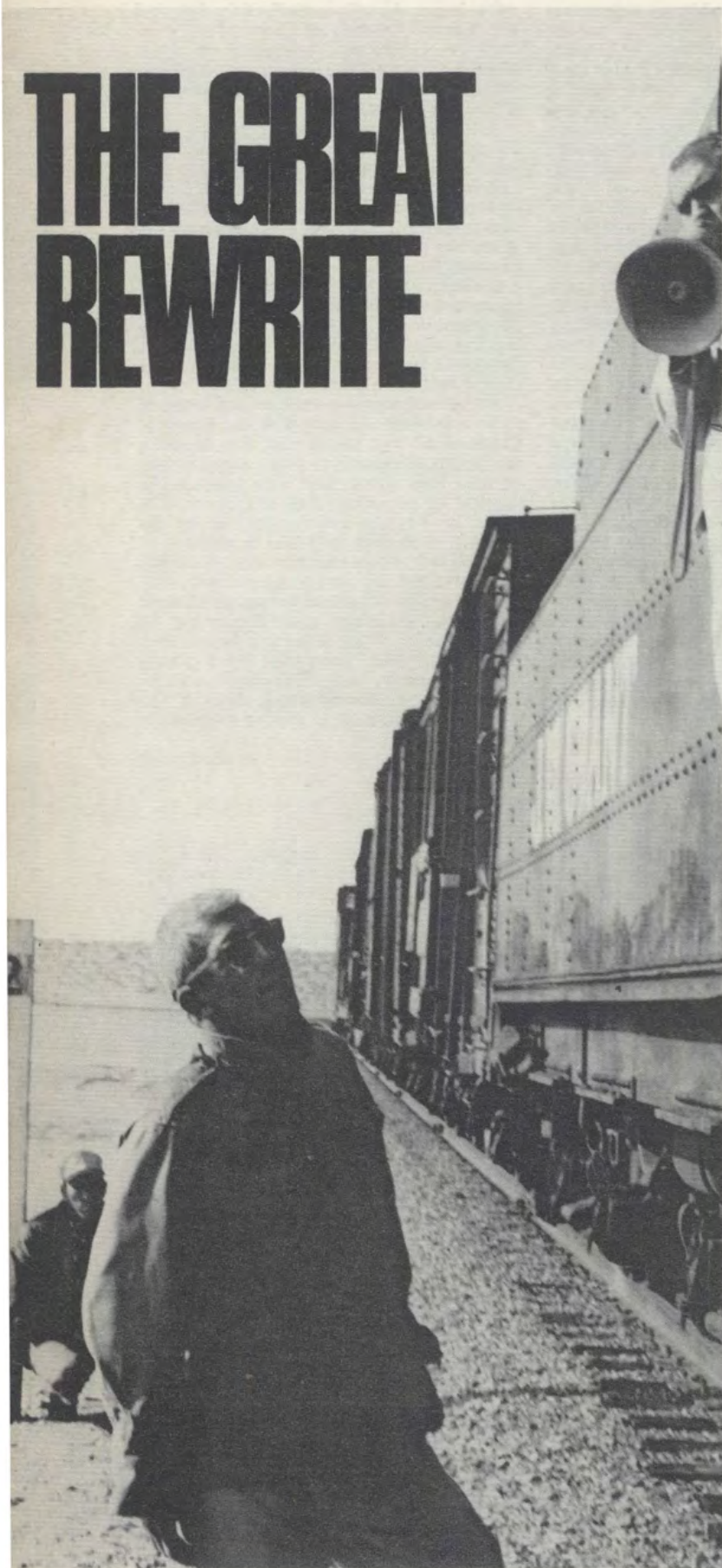
KEN RUSSELL: *Billion Dollar Brain*, the Len Deighton novel with locations in Finland and elsewhere, and the usual corkscrew plot. With Michael Caine, Karl Malden, Françoise Dorléac. Lowndes, for United Artists.

LEOPOLDO TORRE NILSSON: *The White Witch of Rose Hall*, true story, being scripted by Torre Nilsson and Derek Prouse, of Annie Palmer, Jamaican woman dictator of the 1820s and voodoo practitioner. Diane Cilento will star. Platamon Productions.

FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT: *The Bride Wore Black*, from a script by Truffaut and Jean-Louis Richard. With Jeanne Moreau as a newly-wed wife whose husband is shot dead as they leave the church. A co-production with Woodfall.



THE GREAT REWRITE



RICHARD BROOKS DURING SHOOTING OF "THE PROFESSIONALS".

Paul Mayersberg

'He had two hits running on Broadway at the same time. Even Nathan liked 'em. Popular 'n satirical. Like Barry, only better. The critics kept waiting for him to write that great American play.'

'What happened to him?'

'Hollywood.'

—Budd Schulberg: THE DISENCHANTED

THE BASIC DIFFERENCE BETWEEN a writer of novels and a writer of screenplays is that the novelist writes for himself and an abstract public, with his editor as a go-between, while a screenwriter works for a producer or a studio or at best a director. The screenwriter in Hollywood is not an isolated man working in his own time, employing his own criteria and studying his own aims. He is an employee paid by a company. He works office hours in an office and usually to an overall schedule. A novelist is judged when his work appears. A screenwriter is judged en route to the final draft and can be fired before he has even gotten that far. A writer in Hollywood has almost no power, though he can occasionally be persuasive at a meeting if he is among people who trust and respect his judgment—which is rare. Richard Brooks tells a tale of his beginnings which is unfortunately extremely familiar in Hollywood:

"I came out to Los Angeles to do some short stories for radio. I used to write a short story every day, which was rather silly because who can write a short story every day? I got a little tired of that after a year and 250 stories. And I thought, Gee—it would be nice to work on a movie. Everyone I met connected with the movies seemed to get so much money and be so happy.

"Well, I enquired how I could get into movies. One day someone said—I've made an appointment for you to go over to Universal. This is 1941. So I went over there and the producer said—We have a script but the dialogue is not so good and we'd like someone to write some clever things and touch up the dialogue. So I said, how much do you pay? And he said, how much do you want? At NBC I was getting 125 dollars for five stories, so I said 1,500 dollars a week. He said—You must be mad. I don't get that. I'll let you know.

"I never heard from him. Ten days, two weeks went by and I was getting a little apprehensive at having to pay some bills. So I called him and asked, What'll you pay? He said 150 a week and I said I'll take it. Well, at least I was working on *one* story. I worked for eight days and finished the job. It was a picture with Jon Hall, Maria Montez and Sabu, directed by Arthur Lubin and called I think *The White Savage*. When I was going back to New York on a train, I read a review of the picture among a number of reviews all lumped together. There was a character in the movie called Tamara. 'How are you today, Tamara?' That was the review.

"Then one day in 1942 I got a call from Universal, a different producer. He said—You worked on that picture with those three great actors that we made here. It was a very successful picture. I said—I didn't see the picture. He said—Well, we have the same three great actors, Jon Hall, Maria Montez and Sabu, but we haven't got a story for them. But it's got to be about a desert.—Well there's a desert right here in the United States.—Oh no. No cowboys and Indians. That's out. Name me a desert.—The African desert?—No that's foreign legion, been done to death. Name me another desert.—Australia? He said—Well, who's the natives?—Australians, I guess. What do you mean?—No, no. You know, the heavies. The *natives*.—Let's see, I don't know, there are a number of bushwhackers or something. He said—Any niggers? I knew this wasn't my man right away, but I said—Well, there must be coloured people, yes.—Out! No race problems. Name me another desert.—China?—*The Good Earth*, let's stay away

The Great Rewrite is taken from Paul Mayersberg's book on Hollywood, Hollywood, The Haunted House, to be published by Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, later this year.

from that, he said. I said—How about India?—Yes, but nobody's British in the cast. So who we gonna have? That's politics anyway. Lots of trouble in India . . . By this time I'm fast running out of deserts and I said—What about Turkey? There's a desert there.—Sounds interesting. Who are the heavies? So I said—Now wait a minute, I don't know the story. I don't know who the heavies are. He said—Now I'll tell you what. You go and write the story.

"I got some National Geographical magazines, read up on Turkey and came across a rather interesting aspect. After the First World War they were trying to liberate the women, and many new customs were coming in, education, getting rid of the veil and so on. Good for Maria Montez. I built up some sort of story and sent it to him. Two days later I get a call—You let me down, boy.—What's the matter? He said—Where are the riffs?—The riffs? There are no riffs in Turkey. He said—No, no. You don't know what I mean. I mean the fellows in the white sheets on horses. I said—No riffs in Turkey.—You must be crazy. There's a Turkish consul here in L.A. Why don't we call the fellow? Next day, a nice young man comes round: black moustache, about thirty or thirty-two.—This is going to be great for your country, says the producer. Every producer says that.—We want to do a story about Turkey etc. Now who are the heavies?—I don't know what you mean.—I mean who are the *natives*?—Turks.—I mean don't you have any trouble with people?—We're having some trouble right now. The producer said—Who're you having trouble with?—Well, we have a tribe called the Kurds, and they're having a kind of little revolt in the desert.—The Kurds? Sounds kinda dirty. Well kid, he says to me, I'll tell you. Let's take the North African desert. OK? No problems. There are riffs there, aren't there? Do a story.

"Back to the National Geographics. I found an interesting aspect. When the Suez Canal was being thought about, they had to decide whether it would be a shorter route. So two packet boats left India, one to go round the Horn and the other, I guess, to Port Suez. Then the parcel would be put on a horse and camel to go to Alexandria, then to London. It beat the other boat by three weeks. I thought the section from Port Suez to Alexandria would be interesting. You know, the Pony Express. Sabu could ride a horse. So I wrote it and sent it in.

"Two days later.—You let me down, boy.—What's wrong?—Where are the riffs? I said—There *are* riffs in Africa, but they're nothing to do with the building of Suez. He said—I'll prove it to you. And we go to see this movie called *Suez* with Tyrone Power and Annabella. In the second reel six guys in white sheets drive up and blow the canal. So, he says, you see! And he leaves. I sit there and watch the rest of the film, and it turns out that these guys weren't riffs but the British masquerading as riffs to blow up the canal because the French were building it.

"So I explain to him and he says—I'll tell you what, let's call the boss. Because, you see, he was only the producer and he had another producer over him. He said—Jack, I've got this story here and it's quite good. Perhaps we ought to do a screenplay. And Jack, who has a very loud voice, the kind you hear even without the telephone, says—Well, is there anything for the broad to do? He meant Maria Montez.—Oh yes, she rides on a horse, she rides on camels, clouds of veils, all that sort of thing, it's great. Sabu gets killed and he's very heroic. Jon Hall gets wounded and they get the mail. It's the Pony Express, except it's in Africa. And Jack (I won't mention his name) he says—When does this story take place? And I say—Before the Suez Canal was built, Jack. And Jack says—And when the hell was that? And I got up and joined the Marine Corps."

* * *

After the war Richard Brooks returned to write for the movies. But they were of a rather different kind. During the war he wrote a novel called *The Brick Foxhole* which was bought by the producer Mark Hellinger, and filmed as *Crossfire* in 1946. Brooks liked and admired Hellinger and worked for him as a writer on *The Killers*, *Brute Force* and *Naked City*. In 1951 he published a novel that was to some

extent based on the character and life of Hellinger called *The Producer*. After that Brooks became a writer-director at M-G-M, having collaborated with John Huston on *Key Largo*. Brooks' career is a typical Hollywood success story, except that failure is much more typical of Hollywood than success. Virtually the only way a writer can get to work on the kind of projects that interest and involve him is to find a sympathetic sponsor. Brooks was lucky enough to find that man in Mark Hellinger, and sufficiently early in his career to allow him to move on from there.

Richard Brooks' problems were solved when he became a writer-director, and latterly a writer-producer-director. But what about the writer who does, and can do, nothing else but write, who can never hope for Brooks' autonomy? (Although, let it be said that Brooks does have a master, the studio who puts up the finance for the picture.) Most writers in Hollywood fall into this category, and a pretty thin time of it they have too. One of the most famous names among Hollywood screenwriters is Dudley Nichols, or rather was because he died in 1960. In his career one could trace the history of Hollywood movies from 1920 to 1960. Nichols' work with John Ford in the Thirties on movies like *The Informer*, *The Long Voyage Home* and *Stagecoach* is one of the most important writer-director collaborations in the cinema. In an article written towards the end of his life, Dudley Nichols explains the craft of a screenwriter:

" . . . The filmwriter must be a film-maker at heart, and a film-maker thinks and lives and works in film. That is the goal, the end result—eight or ten thousand feet of negative patched together to reproduce, upon its unreeling, an illusion of a particular kind and quality. It is that illusion which the film-maker—and in this instance the filmwriter—is pursuing when he begins to gather together his first nebulous conception. The truth is that a motion picture undergoes a series of creations. First it is a novel, a short story, or a conception in the mind of the screenwriter. That is the point of departure. Next the filmwriter takes the first plunge towards the finished negative by building the story in screenplay form. This rough draft, at least in the case of the present writer, will undergo two or three revisions, each nearer to the peculiar demands of the cinema . . . Ordinarily, when all ideas of cinematic treatment have been unearthed and the final draft completed, the writer's work is ended and the creation of the projected film moves on into the hands of the director and other specialists; this is most unfortunate for the writer, for his education ceases in the middle of an uncompleted process."

* * *

The 'uncompleted process' is one of the great frustrations facing a writer in Hollywood, whose life is really one long frustration. He is paid off and the work is taken out of his hands. Very often the screenplay is rewritten and then the rewrite is rewritten. There is an old Hollywood writers' joke, presumably told by a man who has long since resigned himself to his situation: 'They ruin your stories. They massacre your ideas. They prostitute your art. They trample on your pride. And what do you get for it? A fortune!' Dudley Nichols, like Richard Brooks, was an employee, but while he always lacked the power that Brooks acquired, he did gain a great deal of respect. When a poll was taken among writers about 1940 as to which writers they themselves felt to be the best in Hollywood, Nichols was voted best screenwriter and by quite a margin. Nichols wrote *Bringing Up Baby* and *The Big Sky* for Hawks, *Scarlet Street* for Lang, *Pinky* for Kazan, *The Tin Star* for Anthony Mann, and *Swamp Water* and *This Land is Mine* for Renoir.

"In the case of *This Land is Mine*, one of the focal points of the drama was a railroad yard, and as we could not shoot the action in an actual railroad yard we determined to create it largely by sound. We spent endless days gathering sound tracks and trying to orchestrate our sounds as carefully as if they were music. And finally came the scoring of the music itself, not a great deal of it but every bar important: choosing Mendelssohn here, Méhul there, original composition for the rest, and getting it re-recorded as a harmonious whole." The

key word in this passage is *we*. Nichols felt himself a collaborator. Most screenwriters feel themselves alienated employees and tend to refer to the production of their work in terms of what *they* did to it.

Here is an alienated employee speaking, Raymond Chandler: "There is no attempt in Hollywood to exploit the writer as an artist of meaning to the picture-buying public: there is every attempt to keep the public uninformed about his vital contribution to whatever art the movies contain . . . The first picture I worked on [*Double Indemnity*] was nominated for an Academy Award (if that means anything), but I was not even invited to the press preview held right in the studio. An extremely successful picture made by another studio from a story I wrote used verbatim lines out of the story in its promotional campaign, but my name was never mentioned once in any radio, magazine, billboard, or newspaper advertising that I saw or heard—and I saw and heard a great deal. The neglect is of no consequence to me personally; to any writer of books a Hollywood by-line is trivial. To those whose whole work is in Hollywood it is not trivial, because it is part of a deliberate and successful plan to reduce the professional screenwriter to the status of assistant picture-maker, superficially deferred to (while he is in the room), essentially ignored, and even in his most brilliant achievements carefully pushed out of the way of any possible accolade which might otherwise fall to the star, the producer, the director . . ."

The basic difference between Chandler and Nichols as writers in Hollywood is that Nichols' whole life was spent as a screenwriter while Chandler was a novelist sucked into the perpetual Hollywood brain drain. Much of what Chandler says is still true, twenty years after it was written, but certain writers have now managed to create a prestigious image for themselves which, when coupled with a high salary, stands as a substitute for power in the hierarchy.

In a letter to Charles W. Morton written in December 1945, Chandler said: "Let me report that my blast against Hollywood was received here in frozen silence . . . In various roundabout ways I heard that the piece (published in *Atlantic Monthly*) was not received with favour. My agent was told that it had done me a lot of harm with the producers at Paramount. Charlie Brackett [who also worked as a writer on *Double Indemnity*] said: 'Chandler's books are not good enough, nor his pictures bad enough, to justify that article.' I wasted a little time trying to figure out what that meant . . . I would reply to Mr. Brackett that if my books had been any worse I should not have been invited to Hollywood, and that if they had been any better I should not have come . . ."

* * *

From the point of view of the writer, the Thirties was the age of the playwright imported from New York, to give prestige to and make sense of the talking picture. But the Forties was the golden age of hack writing in Hollywood, and it's the period in Hollywood's history that seemed permanently to fix an image of the place in the mind of the public. The studios, who could make or break you, were all powerful. Personal independence was a stupid dream and in a sense, despite all the good work that was done in that decade, everyone was a hack. In the ensuing twenty years the contract system, the corner-stone of Old Hollywood, has crumbled away, but there is still plenty of work for hack writers to continue hacking even within a much freer system. Television has become the School for Hacks, and the luckier or more ambitious writers graduate to major studios and work on 75 per cent of the Hollywood product. So the image of Hollywood in the Forties persists.

The hack writer can in fact be involved in a variety of different jobs. He might be a gag man or a stand-up jokes writer for a comic. He might be an ideas man asked to provide a hook (an arresting beginning to a film) or a tag (a surprise ending or pay-off) in an attempt to lift an inferior Western or thriller into the class of the mediocre. Or he might be a construction man brought in to tighten a slack screenplay, or he might be the author of that screenplay. Many writers do what Richard Brooks did to begin with: write the follow-up, if not the sequel, to a successful picture. Hollywood

survives not on the few successful originals, but on the long grey line of follow-ups.

The producer of a projected follow-up movie determines what the ingredients of the successful original were and then instructs the writer accordingly. The concept of ingredients to a film is an essential part of movie creation in Hollywood. It has both strength and weaknesses. The commercial strength lies in the fact that recurring ingredients in recurring types of film will eventually produce a genre. And the concept of the genre is at the heart of American cinema. Audiences, as well as producers, categorise films as Westerns, War Pictures, Weepies, Gangster Movies, Costume Pictures, Horror Films, Musicals, Situation Comedies, Teenage Pictures and Science Fiction. It is in this method of popular categorisation that Hollywood movies differ from European movies, though in the Sixties certain European countries have adopted the genre based on Hollywood models: Italian Spectaculars and West German Westerns. The spy thriller (here, interestingly, England and not Hollywood provides the model) has become the first truly international genre; and this is important, coupled with the fact that more and more Hollywood films are being made in Europe. Another 'international genre' and scriptwriters of the world may unite.

* * *

Frank Gruber, novelist and screenwriter of hundreds of Westerns, defined one genre in a 1959 interview: "I started writing Westerns for money—a long time ago and I've never seen any reason for quitting. There are only seven basic Western plots. There's the cavalry and Indians story—haven't been many of them lately: they're due for a comeback. Then there's the Union Pacific or Pony Express theme, where you are fighting the elements of nature to build a business or some other big project. These are usually big budget pictures. The homesteaders or squatters story, like *Shane*, for instance, has been a little overdone. Everybody knows about the conflict between the cattlemen and the farmers. But the dedicated lawman type is always good—*High Noon* was like that, and many of the TV series: *Gunsmoke*, my own show *Wells Fargo*, and others. On the other hand there's the outlaw story, humanising or glorifying some outlaw, like Billy the Kid. The revenge theme, with someone riding in pursuit of the man who wronged him. The Empire story, like *Duel in the Sun* or *Broken Lance*, has the builder of a ranch or a way of life threatened with decline because of an outside threat or maybe a weak second generation."

So if you want to write a Western, this is your choice. And it is difficult to think of a Western that does not fall into any of Frank Gruber's categories. One I can think of is Richard Brooks' *The Last Hunt*, an excellent film which tells a story of the virtual extinction by hunters of the buffalo in the United States. But the movie was a failure commercially. Brooks explains why: "The public couldn't stand it. In England most of the scenes with the buffalo were cut out. In the States they couldn't stand it because of their own guilt. Every father's got a rifle: come on, son, let's go out and we'll shoot something. So they go out and they shoot, usually each other. But here it was said that the rotten slaughter of these animals was a disgrace. The intention of the film was to make the public so sick, they would say it was a crime. But they got so sick they never went to see the picture. (At the end of the picture, after the buffalo have been killed and killed until there are no more left, we do not get the ritual gunfight between the hero and the villain. The villain is frozen to death while waiting in the valley overnight for the shoot-out at dawn.) I guess it broke the rules, and here I learned something very valuable: when you deal with a subject in films that is traditional, don't deny it to the public, because the Western and its gunplay is like a musical—it's fantasy and it should be kept as such. If you want to do the real thing, the way the West really was, do it on a small budget, and don't expect any miracles."

It is probably by virtue of the persistence of the genre in American movies that the classic Hollywood screenplay has changed comparatively little in the past thirty years. For the novelist, playwright or outside writer who goes to Hollywood

it is precisely the conventions of the genre that seem terribly limiting. The imported writer is restrained and frustrated from the start. He is often chastised for not producing what Hollywood wants. The true blame for this state of affairs lies not so much in the fact that Hollywood wants formula pictures for 90 per cent of its output, but that it hires the wrong men for the job. Many producers still make no distinction between the personalities of hardened screenwriters and good or successful novelists. Bad management-labour psychology leads to bad business and unsatisfactory products. It's as important to choose the correct writer for the job in hand as it is to hire the right director and the most effective actors. The writer's tragedy in Hollywood is that he's constantly being miscast.

Alfred Hitchcock, who is as much a producer as a director, has often expressed dissatisfaction with regular Hollywood writers. He is fond of saying that he prefers to use a novelist or playwright. Now there are two reasons for this, one that he admits to and one that he doesn't. His stated reason for wanting to employ outside writers is that they are less likely to be bound by Hollywood conventions of plots, characters and dialogue. This is, of course, true. But in practice when he does use a novelist the result on the screen is virtually indistinguishable from what he would have got from a Hollywood writer. I would go further. I think that with the exception of *Shadow of a Doubt*, a masterpiece written for the screen by Thornton Wilder, the films in which he has used outside writers are on the whole his poorer films, particularly from the point of view of dialogue.

* * *

I am thinking particularly of his last three pictures: *The Birds* (Evan Hunter), *Marnie* (Jay Presson Allen, a woman who adapted Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* for the stage), and *Torn Curtain* (Brian Moore, author of *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* and *An Answer from Limbo* and possibly the best writer Hitch has ever used). These movies cannot compare in writing skill with other Hitchcock films by Hollywood writers: *Rear Window* and *The Trouble with Harry* (John Michael Hayes), *North by Northwest* (Ernest Lehman), and *Psycho* (Joseph Stefano). The second, unadmitted reason why Hitchcock prefers outside writers is that as a rule they know little about films and film-writing and therefore his suggestions and decisions will go unchallenged, whereas an experienced screenwriter might oppose him. Hitchcock, for all his knowledge and brilliance, has been as guilty of miscasting writers as anyone in Hollywood.

In 1950 Hitchcock hired Raymond Chandler to write the screenplay from Patricia Highsmith's novel *Strangers on a Train*. Here is the writer's side of the story: "I got myself involved in a film job doing a script for Alfred Hitchcock . . . It's a silly enough story and quite a chore. Why am I doing it? Partly because I thought I might like Hitch, which I do, and partly because one gets tired of saying no, and some day I might want to say yes and not get asked . . . The thing that amuses me about Hitchcock is the way he directs a film in his head before he knows what the story is. You find yourself trying to rationalise the shots he wants to make rather than the story. Every time you get set he jabs you off balance by wanting to do a love scene on top of the Jefferson Memorial or something like that. He has a strong feeling for stage business and mood and background, not so much for the guts of the business. I guess that's why some of his pictures lose their grip on logic and turn into wild chases. Well, it's not the worst way to make a picture. His idea of characters is rather primitive. Nice Young Man, Society Girl, Frightened Woman, Sneaky Old Beldame, Spy, Comic Relief, and so on. But he is as nice as can be to argue with . . ."

Chandler made some notes on an early scene in *Strangers on a Train*, in which he expressed dissatisfaction at the idea of the film. "I went nearly crazy myself trying to block out this



THE WRITER IN HOLLYWOOD AS SEEN BY "SUNSET BOULEVARD" WILLIAM HOLDEN AS DISAPPOINTED NOVELIST, ALIENATED EMPLOYEE (WITH FRED CLARK AND NANCY OLSON) AND TAME LAP-DOG (WITH GLORIA SWANSON).



WRITER AT WORK: GREGORY PECK AS SCOTT FITZGERALD, DEBORAH KERR AS SHEILAH GRAHAM IN HENRY KING'S "BELOVED INFIDEL".

scene. It's darn near impossible to write, because consider what you have to put over:

1. A perfectly decent young man agrees to murder a man he doesn't know, has never seen, in order to keep a maniac from giving himself away and from tormenting the nice young man.
2. From a character point of view, the audience will not believe the nice young man is going to kill anybody, or has any idea of killing anybody.
3. Nevertheless the nice young man (Guy) has to convince Bruno (The Maniac) and a reasonable percentage of the audience that what he is about to do is logical and inevitable.
4. While convincing Bruno of all this, he has yet to fail to convince him utterly so that some suspicion remains in Bruno's mind that Guy intends some kind of trick, rather than go through with it in the literal sense.
5. All through this scene we are flirting with the ludicrous. If it is not written and played exactly right, it will be absurd. The reason for this is that the situation actually is ludicrous in its essence, and this can only be overcome by developing some sort of superficial menace, which really has nothing to do with the business in hand.
6. Or am I still crazy?

The question I should really like to have answered, although I don't expect an answer to it in this lifetime, is why in the course of nailing the frame of a film together so much energy and thought are invariably expended, and have to be expended, in exactly this sort of contest between a superficial reasonableness and a fundamental idiocy?"

What Chandler's contribution was to the final screen version of *Strangers on a Train* I don't know, but he eventually received joint screenwriter credit with Czenzi Ormonde. Certainly the scene (the hook) which he found so hard to write is perfectly convincing on the screen. Bruno asks Guy to commit a murder for him, and he in return offers to commit a murder for Guy. Bruno's theory is that when the police investigate, they will have no suspects because there will have been no motives. Two murders will have been committed by total strangers. Guy, while technically innocent and intending to remain innocent, is overcome with guilt like

a schoolboy, who when the teacher asks whoever it was in the class to own up, feels guilty though he knows he didn't do it. Chandler underrated the originality of the idea and apparently failed to see the implications of the story: that guilt is a disease and you can catch it even on a train.

Bruno and Guy are opposites and complements: the mentally disturbed man who has no sense of guilt, and the normally adjusted man with an easily aroused sense of guilt. That's on the surface, underneath the two men are very similar: they both have family backgrounds in which their mothers played the dominant role. Bruno's desire to have his father murdered brings Guy's deep-seated fear and guilt to the surface. The irony is that Guy, while recognising Bruno's insanity, cannot help feeling a certain admiration for him.

No one admires Raymond Chandler's writing more than I do, but I can't help feeling that he was out of his depth with this subject. He didn't feel he could adapt the novel for the screen because he didn't like the novel. The ability to do a successful adaptation must depend to begin with on the adaptor's interest in the material. Otherwise it becomes another case of a writer miscast.

* * *

Daniel Taradash, one of the best-known and best-paid screenwriters in Hollywood, has been fairly well 'cast' throughout his career: "I try to do books I have great respect for in terms of what they're about. Normally I'm not attracted to material unless it's well-written. A well-written book stimulates my creative or contributory juices. I find it difficult to work on a book about which I have to say 'Well, I don't like the writing but there's a story here . . .' Books like *From Here to Eternity*, *Hawaii* and *Andersonville* or a play like *Picnic*—all of them seemed to me to be saying something. I don't mean a social something, but perhaps something about (to use a trite phrase) the condition of man, or the problems of man.

"In adapting a long book the problem is to break the material down in two ways. First, what I try to discover is the basic premise, the basic idea behind a particular piece of writing, and to dramatise that without making it obvious. Second, I take certain exciting elements and try to manoeuvre them, by some kind of chemistry or magic or technique, into what seems inevitable in the screenplay. I'll give you an example in *From Here to Eternity*. It would seem to me inevitable that when Maggio dies (in the film) Prew blows taps that night in the quadrangle. Well, that isn't in the book at all. He blows taps early in the book. Maggio doesn't die in the book, he's shipped out to the States or something. But in the screenplay it just seems as if there's no other way that the story could go at that point."

Taradash is about as far from Hollywood hack writer as you can get. Many of his scripts have been written alone, without having a director around and sometimes without a producer. He likes to write a first draft with as little interference as possible. And this is luxury indeed in Hollywood. Taradash is an example of a screenwriter who has used his own prestige, gained partly from the success of *From Here to Eternity*, as an instrument of power and influence. But prestige is frail and in the last analysis no substitute for real power. What follows is his account of the preparation of the movie of James A. Michener's novel *Hawaii*, and it is a cautionary tale of the writer in Hollywood.

"Fred Zinnemann asked me to do the film with him and I was delighted. I studied the book and I said to him that the simple important idea behind it is that all men are brothers, and in order to state that he should do the whole book. But to do the whole book would take five or six hours screen time. This was right at the beginning of the project. We said, what's wrong with the book at five or six hours if you do it in two pictures? And we got the notion that we should do two pictures, not to appear two or three years apart but within two or three weeks of one another and to be run in theatres near each other. A patron would buy for say 3 dollars a ticket to both pictures, and he could see one on say a Tuesday and then the other any time in the next six months. We didn't work it out from a distribution point of view but this was our

notion and we went with it to the Mirisch Brothers and they went with it to United Artists. Unlike what has been printed recently, they all thought it was a fantastically good notion commercially. People want something new. It's the right way to approach such a huge project, etc. They had paid \$600,000 for the book and they felt they were getting their money's worth this way. In fact they were utterly delighted. So Zinnemann went on a six month vacation, and I started work on a treatment of the entire book.

"I broke it down and wrote some of the first picture. Zinnemann came back on the project and did some scouting work in Hawaii and the Polynesian Islands. But without going into too much detail two things became apparent to me, one of which was that I couldn't do the entire job in the time which had been allotted to me, so that Zinnemann would be able to shoot when he was supposed to shoot. It was just too mammoth a thing for me to do, and I'm not a fast writer at all. I suggested that they get a second writer to work on the second picture while I was working on the first one. The writer I suggested was Dalton Trumbo. Though I didn't know him I knew that he had worked on *Exodus* and *Spartacus*, on massive material, and I felt he might go along with the treatment I'd written and use that as a basis for the second picture.

"Well, Arthur Krim and other United Artists people and the Mirisches and Zinnemann read the eighty pages I had written and they all said they liked it immensely and that they would wait for me to finish it all. They didn't want another writer on it. So I continued to work on the first picture and after working on it a long, long time I came to another conclusion. (All told I worked on the project for fifteen months: that included a long treatment and a first draft of the first picture which ran to 250 pages.) And the conclusion was that we had made a mistake in the physical problems and budget problems of carrying this notion out, and I told the Mirisches that in my opinion they should abandon the two picture concept and just do the first picture and call it *Hawaii*.

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"If this first picture were successful they could always make another based on the remainder of the book. Also I felt that it was impossible for Fred Zinnemann, brilliant director though he is, to do what he had anticipated, which was to shoot these two pictures without a pause. In other words, he might have been shooting for two hundred or two hundred and fifty days and that was assuming nothing went wrong along the way. I just couldn't believe that an artist could be at the top of his form at the end of this period. I suggested he start on the first one and then take a couple of months off and then we discuss the second one. But no.

"The budget was I think \$8,000,000 for the first picture. They wanted Audrey Hepburn, Rock Hudson and Alec Guinness. (The cast of the picture as finally made was Julie Andrews, Richard Harris and Max von Sydow.) And then most of the people concerned were disappointed with the rest of the work that I did. The idea of just a missionary and his wife in Hawaii was not strong enough to hold up that kind of a budget. It needed more, which the second half of the book would provide. And then there was a big meeting of all the people financially involved and they wanted to make a film of the entire book for \$7,500,000, one which would run for three hours, certainly no more than three and a half hours. At which point I said I thought they were dreaming, that it was unrealistic, that there was a script based on only the first half of the book budgeted at \$8,000,000. And all the really big production problems were in the second half. I had the choice of quickly writing the second half, which I suggested at one point, or quitting. Well, finally I decided that this was where I should get off. I couldn't do it. I couldn't write a screenplay of that whole book in a three and a half hour picture. It would be a kaleidoscope. And they hired Trumbo.



DICK POWELL AS THE NOVELIST TRAPPED BY HOLLYWOOD IN "THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL".

"What follows now is not an account of the events from my personal experience. I was off the picture. But this is what I heard. I know it's true. Trumbo then wrote a script which covered the whole book, but which would have run for well over five hours. Now they didn't want a five hour film and they didn't want the two picture idea. But they did like the second half of Trumbo's script. Zinnemann then agreed to do what he had never wanted to do which was half the book, the second half. They then budgeted the second half at over twice the budget for the first half, and they just didn't want to enter into it at that price. Zinnemann was given the right to take it to other studios, which he did, but nobody would go into the project with that in mind. Now they have gone back to doing a script based on the first half of the book primarily. Zinnemann left the picture (I don't know the precise circumstances) when it became clear that nobody would put up the money to make the second half. Zinnemann was on the picture for two and a half to three years, because I believe Trumbo worked on it for over a year after I left. Since then George Roy Hill has been hired as the director. I don't know whether my name will appear on the screen. This depends on when I read the script, and if I believe there's any basis for partial credit or any credit at all." [In the event, the script credit is shared by Trumbo and Taradash.]

Even under the best possible conditions for a writer in Hollywood, that's to say working with a sympathetic director, who may or may not also be the producer, who honestly feels he needs the writer's special talents, even under these conditions there is always for the writer the fearful and frustrating knowledge that the mysterious, ever-present 'they' will decide.

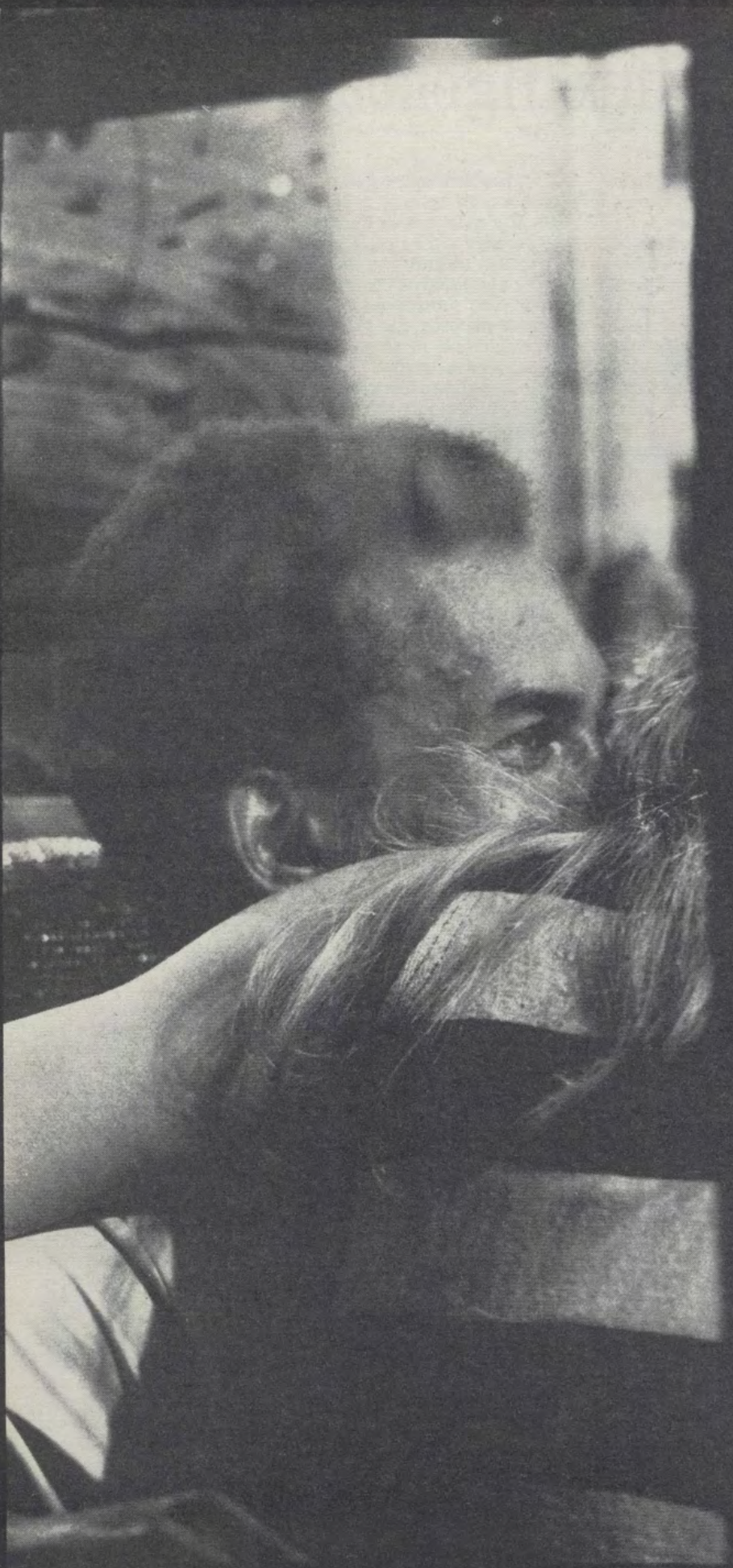
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DUTCHMAN

Anthony Harvey's first film, shot in one week last summer at Twickenham Studios, and based on the play by LeRoi Jones. Shirley Knight and Al Freeman Jr. play the white girl and the young Negro who meet in savage collision on a New York subway train. Photographs by Irvin Denner.



PETER BROOK, or the limitations of intelligence

John Russell Taylor

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, Peter Brook's film of the *Marat/Sade* looks marvellous. Like all his films: what one remembers months and years later is not what precisely they were about, or what was happening at any particular moment, but the moments themselves. What I imagine I shall remember from the *Marat/Sade* in a little while is Patrick Magee's face in profile against the dazzling glare of white light which illuminates the bath-house in the asylum at Charenton, or a passing three-shot of the asylum's director, his wife and daughter reacting with mildly alarmed uncertainty to what is going on in front of them, or bits of Marat's dream, all swirling clouds of iridescent steam, or the extraordinary shot in which de Sade soliloquises in the foreground while at the other end of a bench there waits in the middle distance a menacing bandaged figure, all detail blanched out by the relentless light so that he looks like a human shadow branded on a wall in Hiroshima.

But however marvellous the moments, the *Marat/Sade* is a film which cannot be judged simply as an agglomeration of unforgettable details. It is, to begin with, the film of the play. Obviously everyone concerned has been determined that it shall not be just a record of an exciting theatre production, in the way that Czinzer's opera and ballet films or Stuart Burge's film of Olivier's *Othello* unmistakably are. Brook and Michael Birkett have both said frequently that what they are aiming at here is rather an independent, free-standing film—observing the general shape of the play, certainly, but using the special resources of the cinema to burrow deeper and deeper into it, rather as Cocteau did in *Les Parents Terribles*. Here, it seems to me, they run into their first major difficulty.

In the introduction to the English text of the play Brook puts up a spirited defence of it as a play, rounding on those critics who have regarded it as an assembly of theatrical tricks with no real substance but a lot of opportunities for a gifted director. He quotes Weiss himself, to the effect that the play's attitude is Marxist, and without quite endorsing this he finds that the play "is firmly on the side of revolutionary change." The play of course does not provide answers, but it asks awkward questions powerfully, and works on many levels, so that "the force of the performance is directly related to the imaginative richness of the material."

Making all allowances for a measure of chivalry in Brook, understandably uncomfortable at the idea that he and his production have been praised largely in despite of the author, one must still accept that Brook does believe in the imaginative strength of the material. And this belief works, it seems to me, against the film's chances of success. For under close-up inspection the play virtually disintegrates. Far from showing us layer upon layer of significance, the camera's deeper exploration of what the author has written leaves me at any rate constantly noting the throwaway ease with which Weiss modulates from the cool realism of the asylum director's part to the didactic tone of many of de Sade's and Marat's speeches, the fine writing of de Sade's autobiographical speech while being whipped, the Brechtian potted histories of the musicians' interludes. It is all immensely skilful, but alienating in the wrong way: we are left outside, thinking not about what Weiss is saying but about how cleverly he says it. Brook, by being scrupulously true to his author, as any right-thinking theatre director would try to be, has only shown up the weaknesses of the original more clearly.

But the production did work in the theatre. It was a magnificent piece of ensemble playing, with each little piece of business, each bit of minutely, clinically close observation of lunatic behaviour, fitted with almost unfailing skill into a complex overall stage picture, to be 'read' like some intricate genre painting, satisfyingly significant and thought-out wherever one looked. This sort of production creates an

obvious problem in the cinema—one so obvious that it would be unthinkable Peter Brook did not consider it.

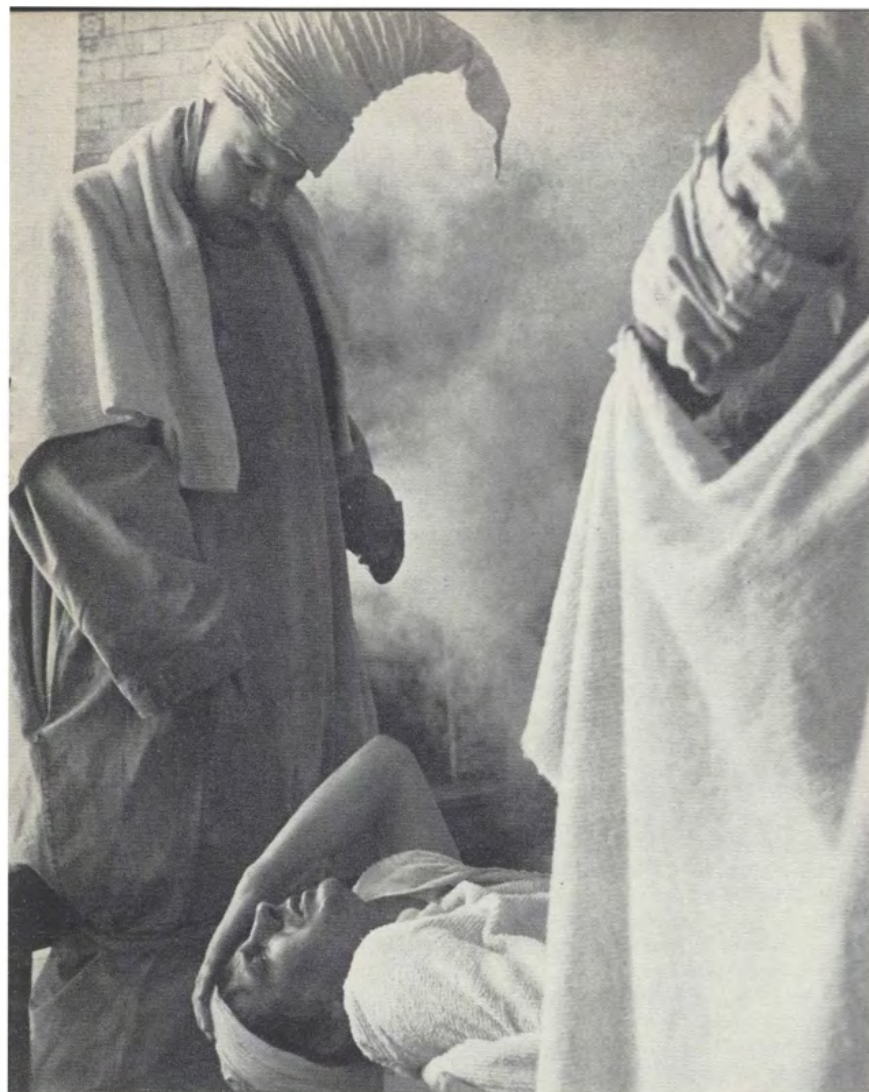
It is like ballet: everything is conceived in terms of a total stage picture, and as soon as you start selecting one thing at the expense of another, the whole shape of the original is changed and perhaps lost altogether. Moreover, details which are fine when subservient to the whole, to be seen or not seen as chance dictates, can look grotesque and disproportionate when isolated in close-up. So it often is here: what on the stage may have looked like a stunningly realistic picture of some picturesque form of lunacy—should one's eye happen to catch it in an odd moment—has a way of seeming self-conscious when forcibly brought to our attention on the screen. Oh, one says, he's dribbling again; how very uncomfortable. I wonder how he does it. Ah, she is going to say another line . . . in . . . a . . . very . . . careful . . . way . . . with . . . her . . . voice . . . rising . . . almost . . . to . . . a . . . SCREAM . . . but . . . at . . . the . . . last . . . moment . . . not . . . quite. Clever: she did it again in *US*, of course.

Obviously this drawback must have occurred to Brook. Obviously, making the film at absolutely breakneck speed with a company which had already been playing the piece on and off for a year, he could not hope to change matters very radically. But no doubt he could have changed more if he had wanted to and thought it necessary. Why didn't he? Partly, I think, from his belief in the strength of the text: it should be strong enough to carry this treatment. Partly from some argument—plausible on the face of it—that after all this is a performance within a performance, and it is therefore reasonable that the people outside the performance—the director and his family; de Sade, to a large extent—should perform in a quiet, realistic style and the rest in a theatrical, larger-than-life style. (But what of the lunatics who are in but hardly of the performance; how should they be played?) And partly, no doubt, because Brook relies on his enormous technical know-how and easy virtuosity with the camera to break up, select, and regroup the constituents of the production, imposing on them a new tempo, a new significance, a new pattern of relationships in the cinema.

Tempi are naturally slower in the theatre, effects need more room to get over, the units of a theatrical production tend to be longer, with slower, more gradual build-ups to climaxes. Though it is tempting to think that a film can change this in the editing, can vary a uniform tempo by changes of composition, camera movements and the like, experience shows that it is just not true. Richard Lester's *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* is wrecked on a similar hazard: slow-burn comedy chopped up into little bits does not become fast, snappy comedy; it remains obstinately little bits of slow-burn comedy, but prevented from working satisfactorily even in their own terms. So it is with the *Marat/Sade*.

Take Glenda Jackson, for instance. In the theatre she was electrifying as Charlotte Corday, timing brilliantly her first great speech announcing her intentions and her later speech about the guillotine. In the film, the basic truth of the performance may remain the same, but everything is so magnified that one can see each wheel turning, each piece slipping into place. In a word she looks—the last thing she looked on stage—actressy. And not even effectively actressy, actressy because deliberately several sizes larger than life. The camera does not play along with her—as it does with Patrick Magee in his big moments as de Sade—leaving her to make her effects in her own way in her own time. Brook perhaps feels that this would look stagey, and so instead of letting well alone

RIGHT: SCENES FROM "THE MARAT/SADE", WITH (ABOVE) IAN RICHARDSON AS MARAT, MICHAEL WILLIAMS AS THE HERALD.



(or alternatively starting from scratch and persuading Glenda Jackson to give a new performance for the film) he tries to break up her rhythm by cutting to and fro, moving the camera round, and thereby giving filmic light and shade to an essentially theatrical conception.

It is a brave try, but it doesn't work. Easy to say that in taking on the film in the first place Brook was perhaps attempting the impossible; easy to hand out patronising praise for bold intentions, and to reflect—truly no doubt—that if he could not bring it off then no one could. But more to the point one must note that by failing in precisely the way it does seem to me to fail, it still leaves in tantalising suspension the whole vexed question of Peter Brook's stature and gifts as a film-maker. In this it only follows the pattern of *Lord of the Flies*, which seemed at times like one of those subjects which have to be filmed before anyone can see that they are just unfilmable. Or of *Moderato Cantabile*, which perhaps could be filmed, but not, surely, in an adaptation such as Brook wished upon himself. It sometimes seems, indeed, as though Brook is bent on keeping us guessing as a film-maker by always, consciously or unconsciously, rigging the chances against himself from the start.

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Nevertheless, we now have four major films from him, not counting his amateur, undergraduate version of Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* and the as yet unseen third of Woodfall's *Triptych*. It is not as much as one might wish, but by now some lines of continuity should be visible. One thing we can say straight away: Brook has not yet shown himself to be, and gives no sign of wanting to be, an *auteur*. His choice of subjects—and for once it is *his* choice of subjects, since none of them has been imposed by anyone else—is almost wilfully non-committal. Each of them, no doubt, represented some sort of challenge, gave him a chance to follow up some interest which was possessing him at the time. But they seem to have appealed to him rather in the same way that a stage play or production might. The stage director does not, after all, or only rarely, feel that every play he directs has to reflect directly his personal preoccupations at the time he directs it. Presumably he would prefer to direct a play that he likes rather than one he does not, but the main challenge of each play is to stage it in a way consonant with its author's intentions, to interpret the author to the public, rather than to press the play, by force if necessary, into a personal statement straight from the director.

So if in the theatre it does not strike us as odd that during three consecutive seasons Brook should direct, each according to its internal necessities, *The Dark is Light Enough*, *Both Ends Meet*, *The Lark*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Hamlet*, *The Family Reunion*, *The Power and the Glory*, *A View from the Bridge*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Tempest* and *Irma la Douce*, there is no reason why in the cinema we should find the sequence of *The Beggar's Opera*, *Moderato Cantabile*, *Lord of the Flies* and the *Marat/Sade* peculiar.

Not peculiar, perhaps, but indicative. Clearly, he wanted to make all of them—*Lord of the Flies* we know he wanted to make very much. But how? Rather, surely, in the way a stage director wants to direct a particular play than in the way a novelist wants to write a novel or a painter wants to paint a picture. Each represents a chance to try out a particular style, a particular approach. *The Beggar's Opera* belongs to much the same period in his career as his most dazzlingly theatrical, theatricalist productions: *Dark of the Moon*, *Ring Round the Moon*, *A Penny for a Song*, *Colombe*. *The Beggar's Opera* carries the same approach gleefully over into the cinema: more than any of Brook's other films it conveys a confident enjoyment of playing with the cinema like a great bag of tricks.

It is a succession of marvellous ideas: ideas for striking camera movements up and down and all round the prison set which provides the framework for the story; ideas, in particular, for colour effects. Some of the most memorable moments in the film are produced by Brook's use of colour: the presence of Macheath hiding behind a door and hungrily observing the women of the piece indicated by the tell-tale

gleam of his red coat through the chinks; the same red coat flashing through the undergrowth as Macheath's ride is captured in a headlong parallel tracking shot through bush, thorough briar. At that stage in his career Brook was more interested in composing a pretty, attractive picture using eighteenth-century props than in conveying, as he might have chosen to do a few years later, the Hogarthian squalor of eighteenth-century London. And yet, curiously enough, this unjustly forgotten film has had its effect since: it has left its mark, for instance, very clearly on *Tom Jones*, particularly on the closing prison and execution scenes.

But *The Beggar's Opera*, in its day something of a super-production (Herbert Wilcox's great gesture in the direction of culture), had little success with either critics or public. Its failure with critics could be ascribed to various causes. First, in 1953 it looked rather like a retrospective summary of one period of Brook's career, and of taste in the London theatre. Already most of the big Anouilh and Christopher Fry successes were in the past, and the present and immediate future (Brook's as well as that of London theatre in general) lay with Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams, with shades of grey instead of bright colours. *The Beggar's Opera* itself was better known in Britten's deliberately angular, uglified version than in the Lovat Fraser prettiness that Brook's film seemed to favour. And beyond the slight unfashionableness of the film's style, there was a further question. Had it, properly speaking, a film style at all? Many of the individual visual ideas were brilliant and original, but were they ever integrated into a coherent film language; did the film have any overall rhythm? The general opinion seemed to be no. Peter Brook might be a young man with ideas, but he seemed as yet unwilling—or perhaps unable—to discipline them to conventional film form.

In 1953, in Britain, this might seem to be a *sine qua non*. But by 1960, and in France, where he made his next film, *Moderato Cantabile*, things had radically changed. Not least, Brook himself. The last few years had seen the general replacement in his stage work of the earlier flash-and-outbreak style by darkness and sobriety. He had been dividing his time between London, New York, and Paris, where he had directed French versions of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *A View from the Bridge*, not to mention Genet's *Le Balcon*. But also the arrival of the New Wave had done a lot to change notions of what film style should be. If Brook had failed to master the syntax of conventional film-making in the early 1950s, it might well prove to be because he found the whole thing too irksome and hankered after a freer, more elliptical means of expressing himself. In any case, *The Beggar's Opera* had been, in effect, his first film.

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So much for expectations and possibilities. *Moderato Cantabile*, in the event, had little to do with any of them. It was based on a *nouveau roman*, one of Marguerite Duras' more accessible works; but any expectation that it would be technically advanced in consequence was rapidly dispelled. The novel concerns an affair that never quite happens between the dissatisfied wife of an industrialist and a worker who used to be employed in her husband's factory. They meet only in public, nearly always in the same café, and talk round their relationship, using a recent crime of passion as a sort of extended metaphor; the high point of overt emotional expression is the one occasion their fingers touch across the table. Surprisingly—alarmingly, perhaps—Brook chose this text for an essay in classical cinema. Two big stars, Jeanne Moreau and Jean-Paul Belmondo (both rather well cast, as it happens); a script, by Marguerite Duras and Brook himself, which put the basic material through an Aurenche-and-Bost mincer to reconstitute it in conventionally 'dramatised' terms, with the action originally concentrated largely in one setting broken up and opened out to be scattered across half the countryside, and the interior drama of the original externalised with a vengeance, to climax in a scene of passion and hysteria in the deserted café at dead of night.

Again, oddly, Brook seemed to have missed the boat cinematically; or was it sheer perversity which drove him to

film such a subject in such a way the year after *Hiroshima mon Amour*? Maybe: Brook, most articulate of British directors, had not in this instance stinted himself on statements of intention, and we were prepared in advance to find that the film reflected his current interest in drama without exposition, development, story, characterisation, construction, and above all with no tempo but 'the tempo of life itself'. This might to some extent explain the sections of the film in which Brook actually departed from the 'classical' form he seemed to have prescribed for himself: mainly long, long close-ups of Jeanne Moreau just thinking or, more vaguely, just being. Suddenly, in the middle of sequences constructed meticulously along traditional lines, we would move in on Jeanne Moreau, to pursue her on her solitary wanderings around the little French provincial town with attention as undivided as Antonioni accords to any of his heroines during their walks, or concentrate obsessively on her during the brilliantly unboring sequence in which she grows desperate (and drunk) from sheer boredom at a dinner party given by her husband.

And yet one cannot but think Brook's rendering of 'the tempo of life itself' in this film rather odd. In the first place, these patches of would-be undoctored reality are dropped into a context of pre-eminently solid, visually handsome (camerawork by Armand Thirard) traditional film-making. Even if they worked absolutely in themselves—and the party scene at least comes very close to it—they would surely be betrayed by their context. But even more, they would be undermined by the fact that unmanipulated reality is being represented here by a detailed study of Jeanne Moreau. Admittedly there are few people on the screen that one would rather examine in this way, but what comes over is big star magic, and reality has little to do with it. And meanwhile the

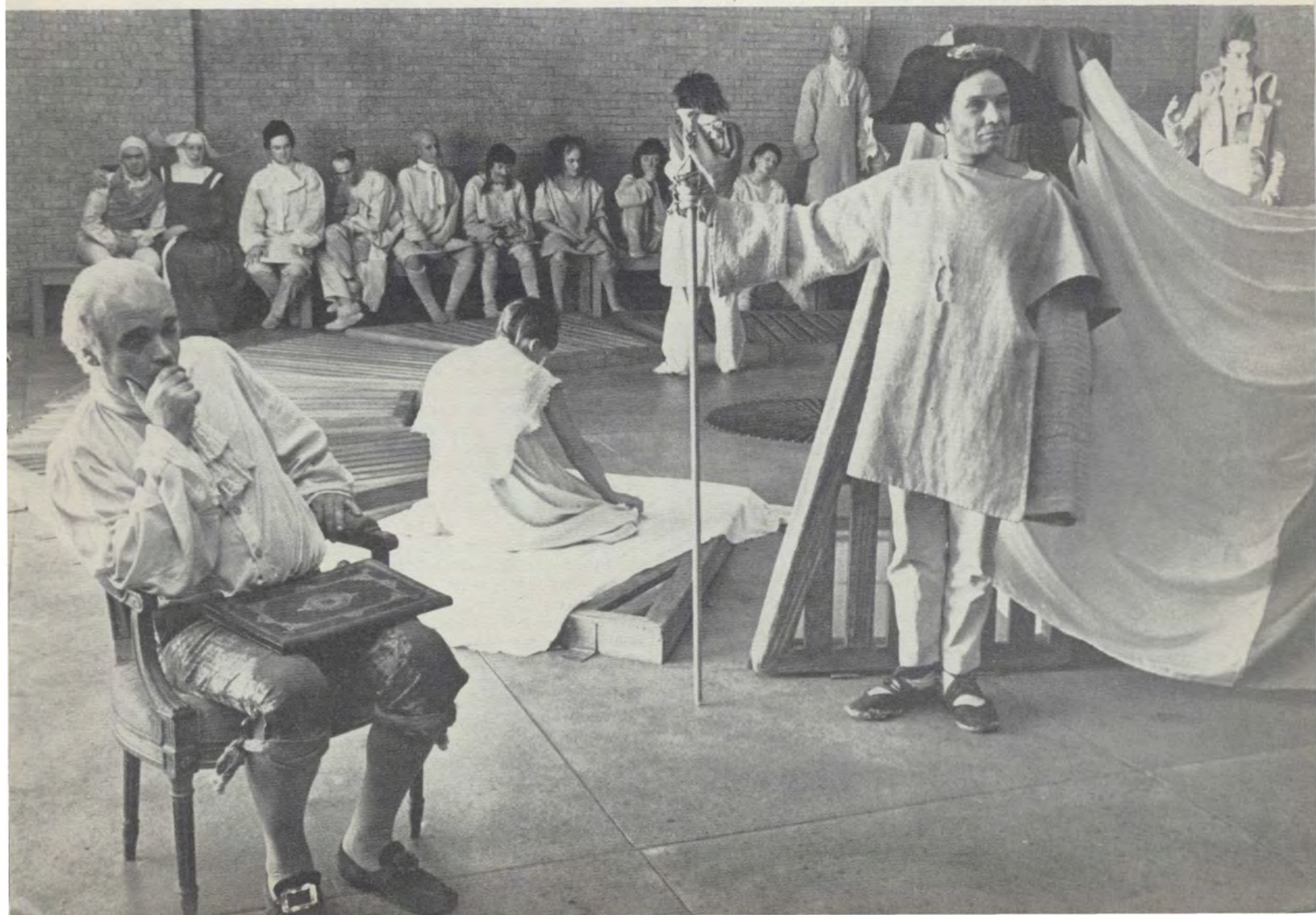
film, whatever Brook might say about his intentions in it, seems now, like *The Beggar's Opera*, to look backwards rather than forwards in his career, summing up in a way his theatrical experiences of the previous few years, mostly on the hazy borderlines of naturalism and stylisation represented by Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams.

* * *

Looked at from the angle of today, this strikes one as a period of uncertainty and divided aims in Brook's stage career, and it is perhaps hardly surprising that *Moderato Cantabile*, the film which comes at the end of the period, should fall similarly between the two stools of half-hearted stylisation and half-hearted naturalism. *Lord of the Flies* three years later promised better. He had meanwhile become involved in a deep study of Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty; his triumphant *King Lear* with Scofield was just behind him. The book, having resisted all attempts at conventional dramatisation (Peter Shaffer, among others, had been involved in trying to script it for Sam Spiegel, preferably with some girls wrecked on the island as well as the boys), would imperatively demand a thoroughly unorthodox film approach. If it could be filmed at all, Peter Brook seemed as likely as anyone to bring it off—and more likely than most.

Many critics thought, and think, that he did so. I don't agree with them, but it seems to me that in judging why he did not the qualification 'if it could be filmed at all' must bulk large. It would be asking too much, perhaps, to expect anyone, however intelligent—and intelligence is one thing no one has ever denied Peter Brook—to see in advance why *Lord of the Flies* is essentially unfilmable. But once one has seen the film it becomes obvious. William Golding's novel works

"THE MARAT/SADE": PATRICK MAGEE, GLENDA JACKSON, MICHAEL WILLIAMS.



simultaneously on two levels: meticulous realism—the entirely believable depiction of what might happen if a group of ‘civilised’ boys were suddenly left to survive as best they could without adult aid or interference in completely uncivilised circumstances—and allegory, in which they stand for all of us and serve to remind us how thin and fragile is the veneer of civilisation on our behaviour.

As in all allegory of this sort, the proper working of the second level depends on the satisfactory autonomous working of the first: i.e., we must believe without question, without any feeling that reality is being manipulated to make a philosophical point too easily. But it also depends, in this particular case, on the degree to which we visualise, and fail to visualise, what we read. At the start of the novel we are entirely conscious of the boys as boys. But with the removal of the adult world as a yardstick we become increasingly vague about their physical reality, we move entirely into their world and see things as they see them. The end, when one of the boys collides physically with the adult world, running into one of the grown-up rescuers, is a violent change of focus, snapping us with sudden shock into full realisation again that these are still, after all, little boys, immediately subservient to adult discipline, ready to play their appointed roles in the convenient fictions adults choose to weave about them.

This sudden change of scale—after a slow move into extreme close-up the instant, brutal reversion to a long shot which enables us, shockingly, to see everything in proportion again—is vital to the effect the book creates. And it is, obviously, something which just cannot be done in the cinema. Little boys, under the eye of the camera, remain unavoidably little boys; and as Brook directs them (no doubt as anyone would direct them in a subject of this sort) decidedly self-conscious little boys at that. And so, the allegory cannot work satisfactorily, and the rest, the horrific, realistic study of the truth which lies behind *Coral Island*, does not work either—probably *could* not work satisfactorily on the screen.

Whose fault is this? One may suspect that Brook is not the best equipped of directors to direct non-professionals or children. On stage he generally seems to get the best results from very conscious actors, who can be approached by the director through their intelligence (curious, therefore, that he should be so drawn to the Theatre of Cruelty, with its accentuation of the subconscious and the instinctive). Except for the boy who plays Piggy—one of the most noticeable but hardly the most complex of roles in the film—he does not have much success at making his young performers seem natural and at their ease. Otherwise, there is little which seems

inherently wrong or miscalculated in his handling of the film’s material. The normally, formally shot material of the main unit and the rough, handheld material shot by an independent cameraman round the fringes are ingeniously dovetailed.

There are details one may object to, of course: Brook is still unable to resist the lure of a striking single shot, like the famous one of the boys marching along the coral strand in their full pseudo-medieval uniforms, whether or not it fits in with the rest of the film or even makes sense in its context. But by and large *Lord of the Flies*, if it brings us back to the pattern of the courageous, imaginative failure, gets us no further towards a solution of the Peter Brook paradox. Is he or is he not a film director? Certainly he is as spectacularly equipped to be one as any now working in the British cinema. He has the know-how, the intelligence, the enterprise, the stature to do more or less what he wants, or at any rate nothing he doesn’t want. Four films in fourteen years is not a lot, but each one of those films has promised much, and none of them has turned out ordinary.

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Yet the problem remains. Why is it that after we have praised Brook’s films for their enterprise and, in parts at least, for their very real achievements, there still remains a teasing dissatisfaction, something which is not quite reassuring? Is the fact that after four major films we are still not really any closer to certainty about whether Brook will establish himself as an authentic film man, beginning to look like circumstantial evidence that he won’t? And if this is so, why? What is the missing ingredient? Big questions, admitting of no easy answer.

Clearly, I think, the solution must lie somewhere in the connection between Brook’s two commitments, to the theatre and to the cinema. I have suggested that the nature of a stage director’s relationship with his literary material is, by convention and in general practice, somewhat different from that of the film director with his. The stage director is much more of an interpreter, an executant—he is rather the conductor of the orchestra than the composer of the symphony, and his readiness to conduct Mozart would not necessarily prevent him from conducting Rachmaninov. The film director, at his best, is the composer, the creator of a work of art. Of course, not every film director is or aspires to be this; but it is hardly conceivable that a purely film director of Brook’s stature would be willing or happy to occupy the honest-journeyman niche.

One may sense Brook’s strong commitment to each film project as a project—nothing less could account for the two years he spent just setting up *Lord of the Flies*. But in the cinema he always seems slightly like a visitor from another planet, tremendously intellectually excited by what he finds but stopping short of some ultimate emotional involvement. This perhaps explains why Brook, extremely self-conscious and aware of what is going on round him in terms of fashion, should in his films always seem slightly unfashionable, slightly detached from the filmic times. Each film relates more closely to what he is doing in the theatre than to what is going on elsewhere in the cinema. Or, more precisely, to what he has been doing: each seems a sort of footnote gloss on the work of the preceding years, a farewell, almost, to a particular style or preoccupation.

All this may be true, and yet not seriously damage our regard for individual films. But in Brook’s films there is something more. Not a failure of technique—he clearly has forgotten more about film technique than many perfectly acceptable directors ever knew—and certainly not a failure of intelligence. But a failure, if you like, of instinct. He has brilliant ideas within films, but what seems to be lacking is a comprehensive, unifying idea of each film as a whole: the marvellous individual shots never quite add up to a coherent, consistent way of looking at things through a viewfinder. His films are a fascinating, because extreme, demonstration that as far as sheer intelligence can take one, there is still something more, something beyond an infinite capacity for taking thought. For all their graces, his films are not touched by that Grace which remains stubbornly beyond the reach of art.

“THE MARAT/SADE”: ROBERT LLOYD, IAN RICHARDSON, BRENDA KEMPNER, CLIFFORD ROSE.



LE DEUXIEME SOUFFLE



Tom
Milne

HARDLY SURPRISING, PERHAPS, that Jean-Pierre Melville, with his constant preoccupation with the underworld and its peculiar codes of loyalty and honour, should have hailed Becker's *Le Trou* as "le plus grand film fran  ais de tous les temps"; or that some half-dozen years later he should himself produce, in *Le Deuxi  me Souffle*, a fitting companion-piece to Becker's greatest work. What is surprising is the tone of the film, which has a serenity of style, a gravity and weight quite different from Melville's previous work (except, possibly, *L  on Morin, Pr  tre*). Different enough, apparently, to cause the *Cahiers* critics to blackball the film unanimously in their "Conseil de Dix" on its Paris opening last December. Or does one detect a trace of malice directed against the one-time adoptive father of the Nouvelle Vague, who has since repudiated his paternity in no uncertain terms?

The opening sequence of *Le Deuxi  me Souffle*, in fact, has a rigorous, withdrawn quality strongly reminiscent of Bresson's *Un Condamn      Mort*: the grey half-light before dawn; stark, angular concrete walls; warders quietly prowling on their rounds below; three men on the roof, waiting, tensing themselves for the moment of escape. And finally, the sudden joyous dash to freedom—not, this time, into Bresson's mysterious night of the soul, but a sunlit

forest, a railway track, and a goods train heading for civilisation.

From there on we are in *film noir* territory—gunmen tiptoeing up deserted stairways, cars hurtling along the highway, raincoats with bulging pockets, sudden outbursts of violent carnage—as Gustave Minda, Melville's ageing gangster hero (familiarily known as Gu) returns to Paris to find his mistress Manouche being browbeaten by a rival gang, plans his revenge, suddenly changes his mind and flees to Marseilles, does one last job which will enable him to retire in comfort to Italy, is tricked by the police into inadvertently betraying one of his comrades, and dies in a desperate attempt to restore his good name. But *Le Deuxi  me Souffle*, like *Le Trou*, is adapted from a novel by Jos   Giovanni; and like *Le Trou*, has a more than merely superficial affinity with Bresson and *Un Condamn      Mort*. For if one senses that Gu Minda, like Lieutenant Fontaine, is touched by some sort of grace in his escape, it is because this escape enables him to take possession of his own destiny once again, and to prove that the mind, nerves and muscles which have been withering away under a life prison sentence can still serve him as well as they did when they first earned him his reputation as France's Public Enemy No. 1.

This, really, is the subject of the film:

Gu's fear that at forty-six (in the novel he is several years older, and constantly referred to as "le vieux") and after eight years in jail, he can no longer make the grade. It is a theme Melville has already tackled, in a slightly different way, in *L'Ain   des Ferchaux*, where the ageing gangster hires a younger man to do his strongarm stuff, and becomes so dependent on him that, as though he had yielded up his manhood, he rapidly declines into senility. But where the central sequences of *L'Ain   des Ferchaux* stray, attractively but irrelevantly, into a love poem dedicated to America and the American highway, *Le Deuxi  me Souffle* never wanders an inch off course.

Our first glimpse of Gu Minda comes as he nervously eyes the hazardous jump he must make from inner to outer prison wall, and hesitates as one of his companions misjudges the distance and crashes to his death on the ground far below. Helped over the difficult bits of the escape by a younger prisoner, Gu carries his doubts with him to Paris, where he is as warily ill-at-ease as a caged animal set free in the jungle. Tired, edgy, sleeping endlessly but fitfully, clutching his revolver at every knock on the door, he liquidates the two thugs who have been bothering Manouche with all his old efficiency, but hesitates

when it comes to tackling the bigger game of their boss, Jo Ricci. Thinking better of it he returns to his hideout, lies down, and turns his face to the wall.

But in Marseilles, rested, refreshed, and equipped with the new dignity of moustache and business suit (for purposes of passport photograph and false papers), everything comes into focus for Gu when he is asked to become the fourth man in a multi-million robbery on an armoured van carrying a load of platinum. His new chief turns out to be Jo Ricci's brother Paul, an old friend who bolsters his self-confidence by his absolute trust (with the thorny question of Jo left unspoken and unresolved between them); while the other two, Antoine and Pascal, reinforce his doubts by their instinctive mistrust. And the sequence before the robbery as they wait on the bleak hillside for the armoured van to appear—a conventional situation superbly shot, with a complex pan and tracking shot gathering landscape and characters into an indissoluble circle—brilliantly underlines Gu's sense of being poised on the razor's edge of his last chance. Antoine and Pascal wait in position, neutrally hostile; Paul (in a Buñuelian shot) stares with blank absorption at some ants scurrying over the rocky ground; Gu, acutely aware of the other three, wipes the sweat from his palms, nervously practising the shot with which he will kill the motor-cycle guard from the car window.

The attack, when it comes, runs like a well-oiled machine—swift, smooth, precise, with Gu efficiently stifling an unexpected diversion—and the sequence ends on the same note of sudden shared intimacy which one finds between Fontaine and Jost in *Un Condamné à Mort*, or the tunnellers at the moment of breakthrough in *Le Trou*. Gu belongs

again, to himself and to his *milieu*; and Antoine, the fanatical young aspirant to the big-time who shared with Gu the key job of killing the two motor-cycle guards, gazes at him with doggy devotion. "Les deux motards . . ." he stammers, and Gu adds, ". . . c'est nous et personne d'autre."

Old Ferchaux, exiled out on the American highway, had no other reflection of himself than the contemptuous, betraying eyes of young Michel Maudet. Gu, on the other hand, finds himself surrounded by a confidence which reflects on him until he is gradually able to rejoin the hierarchy: first, Manouche and his unquestioningly faithful aide, Alban; then Paul, who takes his word against his own brother; Antoine and Pascal; and finally Orloff—perhaps Orloff most of all—who has appeared like a guardian angel out of nowhere to suggest that Gu might take the place in the robbery which he himself has refused to accept.

Handsome, mysterious, cultured, correct, this Orloff sits almost like a judge or arbitrator over the *milieu*. Behind his detached efficiency lies years of experience in dealing with men like Gu, and with dangerous rabbits like Antoine (notably the marvellous double double-cross with which he plants a gun for use at a rendezvous at which he expects trouble, intending Antoine to find it—and catches out both Antoine and the audience).

Although we never discover how or when or under what circumstances Gu and Orloff came to be friends, their friendship is no mere empty phrase: their shared past is almost tangibly present. And one of the remarkable things about the film, again quite new in Melville's work, is this density, this sense that the characters' lives extend

beyond the limits of the action. Casual phrases in the dialogue, tiny visual hints here and there, suffice to create a world we never see: the history of fraternal disapproval suggested by Paul's reluctance to discuss his brother's actions; the lifetime of devotion contained in Alban's expressionless refusal when two thugs tell him to call Manouche for "questioning"; the feeling that Inspector Blot has long cherished a hopeless love for Manouche.

Earlier, characters like Elizabeth and Paul in *Les Enfants Terribles* existed only within the confines of their room; Barney and Léon Morin only until her impossible love for the priest has been resolved by their parting; Silien and Maurice in *Le Doulos*, only during the progress of their mutual destruction. And the one real weakness of *Le Doulos* (a film in which underworld loyalty is again the dominant theme), is perhaps that the past history of friendship between Silien and Maurice is never really evoked and has to be taken on credit. We are led to believe, on the strength of a phone call, that Silien betrayed his friend; and then, on the strength of his own statement and last actions, that he remained loyal; but we never know, because there is no anterior store of feeling on which we can draw. In *Le Deuxième Souffle*, on the other hand, gesture, voice, expression, stance, all build a palpable weight of evidence.

One remembers, from the earlier films, isolated moments like this—for instance, Bob le Flambeur muttering "Belle gueule de voyou" as he stares morosely at his own face in the mirror—but with *Le Deuxième Souffle* one begins to think (oddly) of Dreyer and his preoccupation with textures, with the tangibility of a gesture or a glance, and the equal tangibility of objects. Perhaps this is taking it to too high a level, but certainly Melville has found a new texture, a new *presence* for his actors and his objects. The most obvious example comes in the robbery sequence, beautifully orchestrated along best *film noir* lines, but somehow incomplete until, after the last crate of platinum has been unloaded from the van, the camera rests momentarily on Pascal, casually bending to tie his shoelace inside the van before jumping down and at last releasing the quartet to make their getaway. Antoine pausing to fix his tie at a dingy mirror in the room he is supposed to be casing; Alban retrieving a glove forgotten by Manouche; Gu putting a coin in a sweet-machine as he waits at the railway station after the robbery is over—all these tiny details have a reverberation far beyond the casual emphasis apparently laid on them.

But to return to Gu himself. His moment of restoration after the robbery is short-lived. Not for the usual *film noir* reason that loot makes thieves fall out among themselves, but because Inspector Blot, with his intimate know-

LINO VENTURA AS GU MINDA.



ledge of the ways and means of the leading underworld characters, has been able to follow Gu's activities from Paris, simply by deduction. Blot now turns up in Marseilles, cunningly organises a plot to make Gu think he has been kidnapped by a rival gang, and emerges with a tape-recording in which Gu innocently reveals that he did the van job with Paul Ricci. Blot then hands over to Inspector Fardiano of the local police, a man given to torture to make his suspects talk, who gleefully spreads the story that Gu has turned informer. Determined to clear his name, Gu makes a desperate bid for escape, kills Fardiano after getting a signed confession explaining how the information was obtained, and is himself killed. It is left to Blot, finding the confession on Gu's body, to make the last gesture of friendship (now that it matters only to Gu's memory) by "accidentally" dropping the document where a reporter will find it.

The irony of the film is that although Gu has not changed, despite his fears, he returns to a changed world where he no longer belongs, where a man is no longer respected for what he is but for what he is said to be, and where neither police nor criminals any longer observe the rules of the game. As Alban drives him through Paris shortly after his escape and he decides to liquidate Jo Ricci, Gu issues his directions and Alban is forced to point out gently that he cannot drive down what is now a one-way street. It is a slight contretemps, but one which surely helps to make Gu change his mind about the liquidation, and head for Marseilles. There he finds the old order in the process of dissolution: Inspector Blot, with his patience, sympathy ("Longue vie aux truands!") and adherence to the rules, gives way to Fardiano and his policy of the end justifies the means; men like Alban and Orloff give way to unruly, undisciplined youngsters like Antoine who have yet to learn the inviolability of honour where honour exists. (Accidentally punning titles apart, *Le Deuxième Souffle* could be seen as a continuation of *A Bout de Souffle*—the progress from impulse to discretion: had Michel Poiccard lived and learned, instead of being betrayed by Patricia, he might have become Gu.)

It could be a sentimental conception, this view of the criminal code—as in those recent French films where assorted crooks gaze at the grizzled Gabin and admiringly mutter, "C'est un homme, ça!"—except that for Gu it is not a view but a way of life. There is one terrifying scene in which Gu, confronted with Paul Ricci in the police station after his supposed betrayal, literally goes berserk, thrusting his handcuffed wrists through a window-pane and hurling himself head first against a steel filing cabinet, as though by destroying himself he could wipe out the memory of his one lapse from grace. Yet this is a man who commits seven murders, more or less in cold blood, and no attempt is made to whitewash him. Not, for him, an en-



CHRISTINE FABREGA AS MANOUCHE.

dearing little streak of human kindness like Alan Ladd feeding the kitten in *This Gun for Hire*; not even a weary regret for his wasted life, as in *Bob le Flambeur*. Gu simply exists. And Orloff writes a fair epitaph when he comments (in the novel), "Il est dangereux pour la société, mais il a conservé une sorte de pureté."

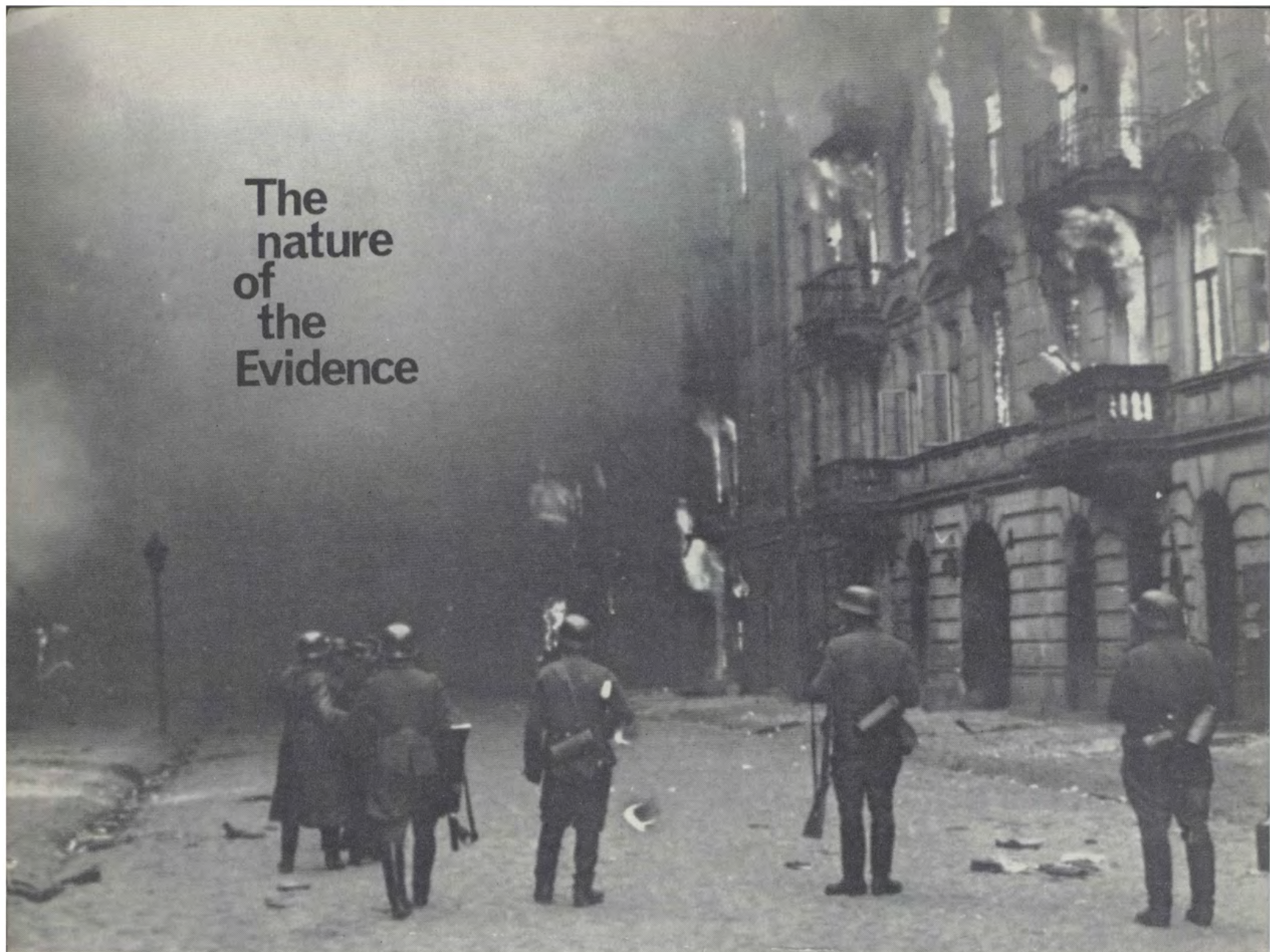
When one comes to think of it, it is this "sort of purity" which motivates all of Melville's heroes in their struggle to achieve *l'amour impossible*. It is why the French girl in *Le Silence de la Mer* can return the German officer's love even when she cannot accept it; it is what Paul has and Elizabeth covets in *Les Enfants Terribles*; what Bob le Flambeur has, but thinks he has discovered in the young couple he watches so tenderly as they sleep in his apartment; what Léon Morin has, and Maurice, and even, in an odd way through his faith in Michel Maudet, old Ferchaux.

It is only one more paradox to add to the paradoxical career of a director noted for—and constantly demonstrating—his devotion to the American cinema, that *Le Deuxième Souffle*, which should by rights have been Melville's most American film, in fact turns out to be so wholly French. Despite its almost continuous line of violent action, what one chiefly remembers is its quietness. All the killings—and there are at least a dozen—are handled with such swiftness and economy that they are over almost before one has noticed. The effect is not of the laconic brutality characteristic of the American thriller, but of the interior concentration of *Un Condamné à Mort*, where the concrete evidence of a Gestapo prison recedes, to leave Fontaine's will to escape as the only

décor. Gu is a man at the point of death, choosing his own moment: although he makes plans and dreams of a peaceful retirement with Manouche, he is not himself deceived. To him the violence he strews in his path is unimportant in itself; what matters is that it will enable him to die in what he considers to be a state of grace. So Gu acts, but the real action of his drama takes place in the silences and *temps morts*, in the unbidden feelings which rise to the surface as he pauses in the street to watch a leisurely game of *boule*, sets his alarm for midnight while celebrating a solitary New Year's Eve, and pauses momentarily before the blank promise of a calendar from which he has just torn the last leaf.

Beautifully and fluidly shot by Marcel Combes in sets and locations ranging from luxurious apartments to seedy rooms, from dank Paris streets to sunny Southern hills, the film somehow achieves an overall texture as twilight as its hero's mood; and Melville's direction has a formal ease and economy which one can only describe as classical. Classical, I hasten to add, in the sense that Becker's *Le Trou* is classical, or the later Renoir—or even, embryonically, the early Melville of *Le Silence de la Mer* and *Les Enfants Terribles* (the meeting of Werner and the girl in the snow, Paul wandering through the billiard-room, the children exploring Elizabeth's new home). Gone, certainly, is the spontaneity and airy charm of the days of *Bob le Flambeur* and *Deux Hommes à Manhattan*; but the new power and authority which one found in *Le Doulos* and *L'Ainé des Ferchaux*, despite their flaws, has now taken command. In its way, *Le Deuxième Souffle* is a complete vindication of the new Melville.

The
nature
of
the
Evidence



Penelope
Houston



EXHIBIT A IS A PIECE of film: two sequences, to be exact, from Frédéric Rossif's compilation *Mourir à Madrid*. The first is a famous scrap of news film: the overhead shot looking down on the streets of Madrid as people scatter for shelter in an air-raid. A fragment which has turned up in one compilation after another, because of the way it seems to sum up the onset of panic, the first realisation of air power directed against civilians. The second sequence comes later in the film: a description of the raid on Guernica. This opens on quiet shots of the town, with Irene Worth, voice at full organ-throb, driving the commentary hard at the descriptive hurdle ahead. Then comes the raid itself: bombers, destruction, shots of victims lying in the rubble of the streets. It's discreet, hasty, not very moving or persuasive. And the reason, one suspects, is that in this case the footage is not genuine—or certainly not all of it. It's an assembly of authentic air-raid film, of course, but is it Guernica? Or is some of it? And does it matter anyway?

Within the context of the film, it certainly matters: there's too much work for the commentary, not enough conviction on the screen, and the emotional impact wavers. But it also matters, it seems to me, from the point of view of simple accuracy. Here, as so often in compilation films, one is made aware of something not quite right. A cameraman would hardly find himself in a position to take at least one of these shots. Therefore, did a cameraman at Guernica get any of them? One is not charging the film-makers with any duplicity. Their job was to communicate the mood of a war, and to that end they were entitled to employ whatever film they could find. They didn't guarantee the precise accuracy or the provenance of every shot, and probably couldn't do so in any case. If anything, it's the film itself that betrays them, as it does when for an instant in a battle sequence they slip into the trap of using what looks like fiction footage*, when again one realises that the camera has got itself into a position where no news reporter would be.

It may seem pedantic to stress a point which is unlikely to trouble most audiences of most compilation films. On the whole, this has been a propagandist medium, and all's fair in propaganda. Even *Mourir à Madrid*, for all its apparent dispassion, is more concerned with the atmosphere than the facts of the Spanish war. There's fighting on the screen. Men are rushing a hill; tanks track through snow; suddenly there are ragged troops dashing by on bicycles. But what hill, whose tanks, why bicycles? Don't look to the film to give the answers. In the present state of the cinema's presentation of history, I doubt whether one could do so anyhow. But films are documents, and documents which peculiarly invite falsification. If historians are to be persuaded into using and trusting them, there's a good deal of past debris to be cleared away.

* * *

From the outset, the audience has had to take the camera's evidence on trust. Unless a shot positively declares itself in its content, it's the commentary which does the job of identification. Jay Leyda, in his book *Films Beget Films*, quotes one enchanting case of primitive faking. In 1898, Francis Doublier was touting the Lumière programme around Jewish areas of Southern Russia where there was particular interest in the Dreyfus case. Doublier put together "a scene of a French

*Is the disputed shot in *Mourir à Madrid* from *All Quiet on the Western Front*? Jay Leyda suggests (*Films Beget Films*, p. 130) that Russian compilers make such extensive use of *All Quiet* footage that "I'm inclined to suspect its identification has been lost and that Soviet film-cutters think that its shots are documents." Esther Schub's *Spain*, and another Spanish war film, apparently both use the same *All Quiet* shot. Has it, via one of these sources, turned up again in Rossif's film?

army parade led by a captain, one of their street scenes in Paris showing a large building, a shot of a Finnish tug going out to meet a barge, and a scene of the delta of the Nile." In other words: "Dreyfus before his arrest, the Palais de Justice, Dreyfus being taken to the battleship, and Devil's Island where he was imprisoned." A masterly case, as Leyda notes, of "commercial necessity sharpening the inventive spirit," or how to make the most of one tug and a palm tree.

Elementary faking wasn't it seems all that uncommon: Boer War skirmishes shot on Hampstead Heath or Wimbledon Common; the Boxer Rebellion with the cameraman's friends dressed up as Chinese insurgents. Méliès' *Coronation of Edward VII* (which was not filmed as a fake) was apparently spliced by some exhibitors on to the real newsreel, because it looked so much better. And I've read somewhere of a cutter, having to work fast to get out his newsreel of Edward VII's funeral, putting in a few shots from Queen Victoria's funeral to make things easier for himself. If by any chance the just dead Edward was actually to be seen in his version, in attendance on his mother's coffin, then presumably no one was likely to notice the indiscretion.

Such endearing deceits belong to the cinema's childhood. One would assume that if anyone more recently has been faking newsfilm (is there, in any case, enough profit in this to make it worth the trouble?), they have done it less detectably. Though it would never surprise one to see a masterly bit of acknowledged faking, such as Kevin Brownlow's Christmas truce newsreel in *It Happened Here*, turning up in a compilation as the real thing. It becomes trickier when the shot itself is genuine, and only the attribution false. The National Film Archive has among its silent newsreels a bit of film which purports to show the launching of the *Titanic*. It rested there with that identification until an expert pointed out that this is a record of something that was never filmed—the shot is of a sister ship of the *Titanic*, which has been sailing under false colours ever since someone, more than fifty years ago, wanted to patch up a non-existent news item. More up to date, here's another case of false attribution: I'm told by Dr. Frankland, Director of the Imperial War Museum, that in the week or so after D-Day German cinemas were able to show film of the Allies being driven back from the beaches. They did this very simply—Dieppe Raid footage, with a new commentary.

Once started on this track, it becomes fascinating—if extremely unprofitable—to wonder how many news shots may have gone round the world, and taken their place in compilation annals, with either a deliberately or an unconsciously misleading identification. Take, for instance, the acres of Nazi propaganda film: shots of ecstatic welcomes to the advancing stormtroopers (the crowds too big for faking, but just where were they taken?); shots from the films made deliberately to terrorise, like *Baptism of Fire*, where the line between raw actuality and controlled documentary becomes blurred.

* * *

Closer home, it's worth looking into the origins of the Western Front footage used in the BBC's *Great War* series. Tony Essex, producer of this and of the later series *The Lost Peace*, acknowledges that in both authenticity had to some extent to be a matter of mood as well as facts. And one action which the BBC took in the cause of mood, or at least of making the action more intelligible, was to reverse film where necessary, so that the advancing Germans would always be seen moving from right to left across the screen, and the Allies left to right. They went to some trouble over this, blacking out the name on a bit of German equipment so that no one would spot it reading backwards. Scathingly, the Imperial War Museum, which supplied a good deal of the film, asks whether it was necessary at all.

First War footage, in any case, seems to be something of a jumble. On the British side, there is little actual front line material shot in action: cameramen moved up with the second line troops, partly because generals felt they were a nuisance on a battlefield and liable to get themselves shot. After this, there are various stages of reconstruction: film shot a few days after an action, with the troops who had taken part; film shot later in the war; documentary reconstruction; fictional



NOTTINGHAM STRIKERS, FROM A 1930's "MARCH OF TIME" FILM.

reconstruction. On the air war, there is authentic film of training and stunting, but anything that purports to be combat footage points to one of two things: recutting of training film, or recourse to the ubiquitous, invaluable stock shots from *Hell's Angels*. And on top of this, there's film whose identification has been lost, film which military experts must place, or try to place, on the evidence of terrain or uniforms.

Most people would probably consider that the BBC did a masterly job: inaccuracies in detail, no doubt, emphases to be argued over, criticism of the use of music to plaster over the cracks—but still a historical compilation, rather than a propagandist one, which in its overall effect stands up to a good deal of scrutiny. In a paper published by the *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, however, Christopher Roads of the Imperial War Museum takes a sterner view: "Continuity" was a constant threat. It led to the utterly anachronistic use of film material solely for linking purposes and, in that some material was more suitable than other, to tedious repetition. But continuity was not so demanding as drama, for dramatic effect almost everything was sometimes sacrificed." Dr. Roads claims that the amount of reconstructed material in the programmes averaged out at about 9 per cent. "We understood the difficulties that the BBC faced in trying to avoid its use, and agreed that if certain programmes were not to break down completely its use had to be accepted. Where, however, there was a relative abundance of original material but reconstructed sequences were preferred to heighten dramatic effect, we felt that the commercial element was victorious over the historical."

There's a revealing clash here, in which it's hard for the neutral observer not to feel that there can be sense on both sides. Tony Essex argues a more scrupulous use of the material by the BBC than the Imperial War Museum seems ready to concede. In any case, 91 per cent genuine footage sounds a fair average. But even assuming that reconstruction was preferred on occasion to reality, only a film man could effectively arbitrate, setting one bit of film against another, and both against the context of a programme which wouldn't be doing its job if it failed to be popular. The compilation film-maker has by tradition allowed himself some licence, partly because his material so extravagantly encourages it. I would suspect that the BBC were more scrupulous than most.

On the other hand, there's the question of the integrity of the film document—the argument of the historian and the archivist. In so far as films are a primary source material, they ought to be protected by the same disciplines as written documents. Reconstruction should be identified, not allowed to masquerade as the real thing. Doubtful attributions might be acknowledged; distinctions might be drawn between first-hand material which can be exactly identified, and material which has already been put through one propagandist mincer or another, and reaches the compiler as a secondary rather than a primary source. Because film is so vulnerable, so misleading, can lead the spectator up so many garden paths, it

should be used more, not less, scrupulously.

All of which might seem to suggest that the ideal compilation should be accompanied by a battery of footnotes; or, as Dr. Roads actually suggests, that there should be colour tinting (impracticable, of course, on television) of reconstructed sequences. It's an intriguing suggestion, which one can't for an instant imagine anyone with a commercial stake being willing to accept. At any reasonable level of scholarship, the reading public will expect footnotes, identification of quotations, all the apparatus that protects textual authenticity. But what about films? Jay Leyda's book quotes an identification by Paul Rotha of just the first 23 shots in his *The World is Rich*. Seven were specially taken; for the other 16 Rotha drew on five separate sources, including Flaherty's *The Land*. A point intriguingly raised by Leyda is whether a concealed quotation from a film-maker like Flaherty is itself morally justifiable. Or did Flaherty in any case get the material from somewhere else . . . ?

In any case, it is perhaps unreasonable for historians to criticise film men for not doing their own job for them. "Historians show a total indifference, even an acute aversion to such (compilation) resurrections," Pierre Billard has written. Historians have so far been remarkably distrustful of film, perhaps because there are such clear limits set to its value, and such mistrust of its objectivity. But an answer would seem to be for historians to make their own specialised use of film; and this, it seems, some of them are increasingly ready to do.

Professor Grenville of Leeds University, one of several historians thinking along these lines, talks of the value of the film record not only for teaching but for research. "Historians have paid a good deal of attention to the role of newspapers in influencing public opinion. What about the role of films? For instance in the late Thirties there is great emphasis in newsreels on the horrors of aerial bombardment, combined with displays of Britain's might in the air and on the seas. The newsreels must have confirmed public opinion that war was to be avoided at all costs, that Britain was safe and could argue from a position of strength. All the arguments of Chamberlain's appeasement policy are heavily reinforced by the way in which the films were put together . . ."

When I suggested doubts about the possible value to historians of the newsreel record, other than at the obvious level of showing what people looked like, or making history a palatable subject for the easily distracted, Professor Grenville sturdily defended a much more fundamental level of concern. Which is encouraging, as well as bringing up some tantalising questions of the oddities of the film record, the way it looks and the way it works, as against the record in print.

* * *

The actual impact of the past, as refracted through film, is often unexpected, sometimes melancholy, usually comic. There is an impartiality about the written record which films can't begin to capture. Read, for instance, a political speech of thirty years ago, cold print long divorced from the speaker, and one can analyse its arguments, its relevance, what effect it may or may not have had. Watch the man making the speech, in the cinema's perpetual present tense, and a new relationship, a tension, is set up between spectator and subject. There are all the immediate factors that would have struck anyone at the time: Hitler's obsessive drive, for instance, his two-handed, downward chopping gesture, like a man slicing through wood; or Chamberlain's wan, dejected oratory, like a man being slowly choked by his own collar. And there are the quite other and fundamentally distracting elements which can't be edited out of reactions to a film: the fact that already it's 'period', that a style of speech-making, as of clothes, belongs to a decade. Inescapably, old newsreels are played in costume. So they become involving, in a way that the objective written record can't manage, and at the same time more remote.

These are dilettante reactions, but they are hard to avoid. The Soviet compilation *Echo of the Jackboot*, for instance, includes an irresistible little passage in which Hindenburg, in

full presidential panoply, loses his way in a parade, then is seen fumbling for change in a neat little leather purse. A gift to any compilation film-maker; a scene which sets up an instant reaction; therefore a scene to be mistrusted. At this moment, the style of approximately forty years ago looks profoundly ridiculous: the sea of silk-hats, the walrus moustaches, the slightly grubby, dishevelled look of the French politicians, the German generals tottering under the weight of their spiked helmets, Lloyd George skipping in and out of cars with his air of theatrical shagginess. How soon, how misleadingly, does a visual impression colour opinion?

Such stray impressions can be positive and useful. One thing emerged for me very strongly from the BBC's *Lost Peace* series, and that was a sense of Hitler as, whatever else, a modern politician. Briand, Ramsay MacDonald, Hindenburg look like men on the other side of a great gulf, men whose transport would be a Daimler or the Blue Train, and who would approach a microphone with the utmost wariness. Hitler brings with him on to the screen an atmosphere of loud-hailers and tape recorders, the open landrover and the light aircraft, all the apparatus of the communications world.

All the same, film tends to violate the old journalistic edict that facts are sacred and comment is free. Fact, on film, carries its own built-in comment with it; and a comment that will change as the audience changes, so that the constant—the piece of evidence on celluloid—is not in itself something fixed and certain, but something that must look a little different at different times and to different people.

I've suggested that, at this moment in time, it's hard to take entirely seriously a speech by a man in a silk-hat and a walrus moustache. The awful comicality of the past has caught up with this particular uniform. In a few more years, it will have entered the protected zone of 'history' as opposed to 'period', as the parade shuffles along a few paces and something else takes its place in the line. And what about the protected figures, the idealised statesmen, the heroes of the newsreels? Jay Leyda quotes one instance of protection: the fact that audiences were never allowed to remember that Roosevelt was a cripple. "Not only did newsreels never show—they never even photographed F.D.R. being lifted up to the speaker's stand." Newsreels are a heavily edited form of source material: they speak with the authority not of impartiality but of national public relations.

Depending on which side of the Iron Curtain you happen to be standing, a scene of royalty carrying out a military inspection can be edited to look like an inane piece of pageantry or a reassuring demonstration of order and stability. Mikhail Romm, whose *Echo of the Jackboot* collects its own joker's pack of 1930's kings and queens, is also able to suggest, with no distortion other than in the commentary, that Mosley was receiving special police protection during an East End riot against the outraged anger of the honest London workman. Look at enough news film, in fact, and one begins to feel that the most constant image of the 1930s is of a mounted police charge into an unarmed street crowd. But I realise, as I write this, how little real idea I have of the facts. How often was this scene actually enacted, in London, or Paris, or Madrid, or Berlin? How far is it an impression gained from well deployed screen use of a few unfailingly dramatic shots?

Film carries still more elusive, more tenuous associations, further hazards to that impossible, ideal objectivity before the fact which should represent the researcher's frame of mind. Jay Leyda's book contains an appealing quotation from one of the subtlest of compilation film-makers, Nicole Vedrès, on her approach to her material:

"This bearded gentleman—a politician—though very smiling and briskly walking, seems sinister. Or rather, he does not, but the picture does. Why? Maybe only because he walks from right to left. And this landscape—why does it seem agreeable, even quite soothing, although the trees have no leaves, and the road is completely empty? Maybe it is only the proportion of visible sky, or the allure of the clouds . . .

"So you take two or three metres of the bearded gentleman, with appropriate music (or silence) and



TWO VIEWS OF THE SPANISH WAR. THE PROPAGANDA POSTER FROM JORIS IVENS' "SPANISH EARTH", THE TWO SOLDIERS FROM A "MARCH OF TIME" FILM, 'REHEARSAL FOR WAR'.

place him just at the moment (1913) when rumours of war have been first indicated. And the soothing landscape can be used just as the word 'hope' is spoken . . .

However the compiler manipulates shots, one is still left with Nicole Vedrès' question. Why is film so rarely completely neutral, why is the bearded politician sinister, the empty landscape reassuring? It's a matter of the direction of movement and perspective, the 'proportion of visible sky', the way the light falls: a reminder that even record film is, first and last, *film*. The makers of *The Lost Peace* might have been following Nicole Vedrès' exact precept when they inserted, into the context of some very ordinary newsreel of the 1919 Peace Conference, a few shots of Paris streets, bleak, empty, the camera gazing away down a long wintry perspective. The shots, Tony Essex said, happened to come from a film made in 1919; but it wouldn't really have mattered. This dateless, anonymous, and in any orthodox sense quite meaningless scrap of film brought awareness into a thoroughly conventional sequence of politicians submitting to their dutiful parade before the cameras.

To make sense out of news film, the compilers need the hindsight of history. For another comment one might make on historical record film, in general, is that it's the record made by and for the man in the street. In peace, the news cameraman has been kept on the doorstep, or allowed in for the few carefully posed, unrevealing shots. In war, he has been with the troops rather than the generals. He hasn't seen the processes of secret diplomacy, the forming of strategy, the details of economic policy. Cameramen have provided us with a kind of shorthand visual imagery for this century: a British political crisis means a crowd in the rain outside Number Ten; the Depression means cloth-capped men on street corners; the General Strike, a shot of idle machinery or empty railway lines; the Battle of Britain, that shot from *Fires Were Started* of fire-hoses snaking away down a London street after a raid. But look behind the shots, and the film image can't help you. What political crisis? How many men out of work? Which air-raid, and which street? Even when the camera records an assassination, it answers no questions. We saw the shooting of Kennedy, and of Lee Harvey Oswald, and the circumstances of the killings still defy belief.

* * *

These are a filmgoer's rather than a historian's stray reflections on the nature of film as evidence: untrustworthy, superficial, vulnerable to every kind of distortion; and at the same time irreplaceable, necessary, a source material that no twentieth century historian ought to disregard, though many still seem prepared to. But one thing, it seems to me, that historians are going to have to reckon with is the unfixed nature of the image, and its partisanship. With time, words take on neutrality; film never seems to—or at least it hasn't done so yet.

Because film is not, in the phrase of the McLuhan school, a 'cool' medium, but a distinctly hot one, it is strewn with booby traps. Film which has been shot one way, assembled one way, and for a purpose, can't easily be dismantled. In fact, the dead passages in compilations are not only those where inert film

is having to bear the weight of commentary, but where shots may have been wrenched out of sequence, in an attempt to create a neutrality that isn't there. It will be a long while before *Triumph of the Will*, for instance, can be regarded as entirely defused. There it is, a thirty year old bomb, rusty but still alive.

As historical film, *Triumph of the Will* is in a rather special category: an actual event and therefore primary source material, but an event controlled, staged and manipulated for the cameras. Back in the field of news film, I asked Tony Essex what areas of twentieth century history seemed to offer the richest source of unexploited film. He suggested the Cold War, given access to Soviet records, and the history of China, particularly China in the Thirties. This was still the age of the newsreel scoop, and it was distant wars, uninvolved wars in which the major powers were neutral, that attracted the cameramen. But to carry on after the end of the *Lost Peace* series into the later Thirties didn't seem to him feasible: the grand design could no longer be held—self-evidently, the second series was already far more resistant to control than the Great War film. The nearer one approaches a subject in time, the more sheerly overwhelming the material.

It may not, however, remain like this. Everyone's general feeling must be that, although film newsreels have surrendered so much of their responsibility to look out for the news, television coverage ensures that there are more cameras recording more happenings than ever before. It is what happens to the record afterwards that is less encouraging. TV news treatment is ruthlessly professional in shaping material, inserting stock shot if necessary to clarify a point, cutting film to commentary. Mr. Essex suggests that future compilation historians may find it harder than they expect to track down basic film material which hasn't been severely processed, or chopped about for day to day journalistic purposes. It's even possible that more screen news could mean less screen history. At least, it seems something that the archivists ought to consider.

THE SENSE OF THE PAST. POLICEMEN KEEPING WATCH ON A GANG HIDEOUT? THE SCENE IS FROM "PARIS 1900", BUT WHAT IS THE ORIGINAL SOURCE?



FILM REVIEWS

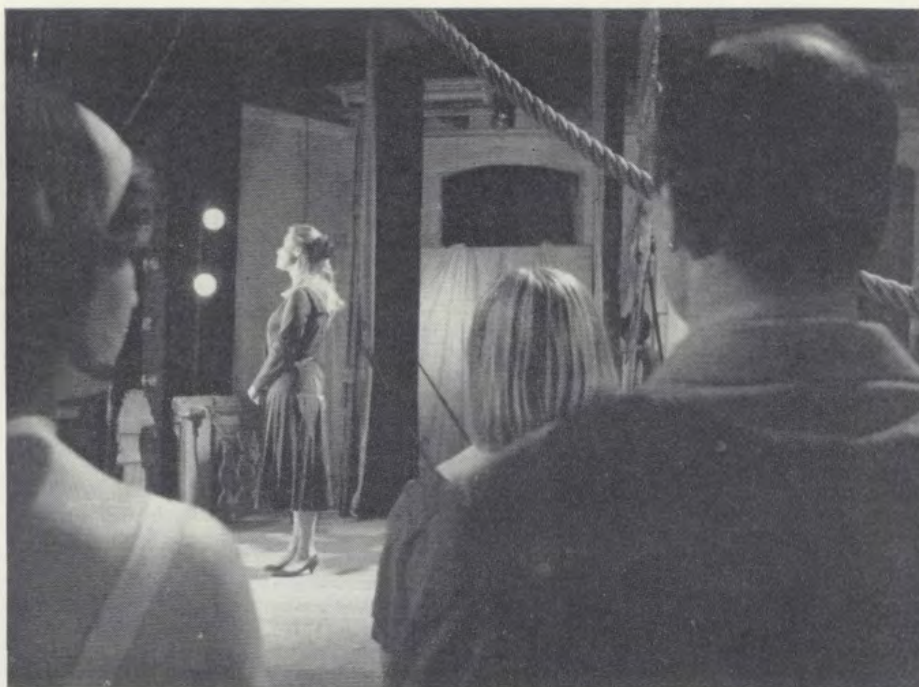
THE MAN WHO HAD HIS HAIR CUT SHORT

MY CASE IS CERTAINLY too extreme to be suitable for a work of literature,' declares the narrator-hero of Johan Daisne's novel on which the film *The Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short* (Contemporary) is based. 'But,' he continues, 'perhaps in the way that a caricature brings out essential traits which may not after all be so uncommon, readers may find my downfall a lesson to them.' And indeed, some people have complained that André Delvaux's film does not interest them because of the too special nature of its hero's problems.

Govert Miereveld, a youngish attorney, has been teaching elements of commercial law at a girls' lycée in, I suppose, Ghent. During the six months preceding her graduation, he has fallen in love with one of his students, Franne Veenmann, but has never had the courage to declare his feelings. Ten years pass, during which he and his family sink lower and lower until Govert is finally reduced to the position of clerk at the court. One Saturday afternoon, he accompanies one of his few remaining professional friends, a forensic doctor, to a small border town for an autopsy. The experience greatly upsets him, and when later in the day, he and the doctor having gone on to spend the night across the Dutch border, he meets Franne again, we feel he is on the point of cracking. They exchange a few words—she has now become a famous actress—and later that evening he goes to her hotel room, determined to tell her at last of his love. She replies that she has always known, but that at the time she had been carrying on an affair with his predecessor, Judge Brantink. Exacerbated by the events of the day and Franne's confession, he shoots her.

Or does he? Time has passed, and we discover Govert in what appears to be an insane asylum. By chance he has seen a newsreel photograph of Franne, and when he asks the director of the establishment whether he had not in fact shot Franne, or whether the bullet simply hadn't killed her, the only reply he gets is 'Indeed.'

Not an ordinary story, and one which



"THE MAN WHO HAD HIS HAIR CUT SHORT": GOVERT WATCHES FRANNE AT THE SCHOOL CONCERT.

some viewers find it difficult to accept as anything but a puzzling case. Delvaux hasn't made it any easier, for whereas the novel takes the form of an extended first-person confession by Govert, written, as he tells us, on the advice of the doctor in order to purge himself once and for all of the past, the film tells the story chronologically, with only hints of Govert's incipient madness. On the other hand, what the film may lose in immediate clarity, it more than makes up for in hypnotic tension. As in the early sequences of Hitchcock's *Psycho*, a feeling that anything can happen comes from the contrast between the deliberate, Kafkaesque banality of locations and action and the suggestion that the main character is somehow at the end of his rope—a man dangling on the very edge of an unseen but perhaps welcomed precipice. The mountains of the mind, their 'cliffs of fall,' have seldom been as frighteningly present. When Govert steps on to his tram at the end of the graduation sequence, we shudderingly feel that his journey may well take him to the end of darkest night.

A less fortunate, if minor, change from the novel is that whereas Daisne describes Govert as being big and strong, the actor Senne Rouffaer is very much the little man, thus adding an unwelcome note of pathos. Still, he is a very remarkable actor, with just the right obsessed quality, and there can't have been that many great Flemish-speaking actors for Delvaux to choose from.

Franne is played by a Polish actress, Beata Tyszkiewicz, and it is difficult to imagine anyone who could better have expressed Govert's vision of absolute beauty than this dreamy-eyed blonde. She convinces us in a second of what the novel takes pages to convey—that Franne is beauty incarnate. And this is extremely important, given the philosophical and metaphysical overtones of both book and film. Franne is short for Euphrasie, which the novel (but not the film) tells us means 'Bringer of Good Tidings'; Miereveld, the novel says (and the film only hints), means a ceaseless swarming, a disquieting to-and-fro. This fits in with what the doctor has to say in the film about Tantrism, that Indian

doctrine in which God is seen as Female. But beauty is terrifying, and it threatens to destroy us as it seems to destroy Govert: humankind would not seem able to bear much beauty. However, although Franne eventually brings about Govert's downfall, there are hints that it is only in his destruction that he has found peace, that she has taught him to find God's peace (Govert = Gottfried = God's peace) by living humbly, raking the soil, carving wood.

The most extraordinary achievement of Delvaux's film is that he manages to suggest visually the metaphysical overtones which are spelled out in the novel. This might only become fully apparent on a second viewing, but it is very much there. He does it mainly by being extremely simple and selective. The autopsy scene is quite terrifying, and yet we don't actually see anything at all: all the necessary horror is produced by the instruments we have seen beforehand, and by the chillingly evocative soundtrack. Furthermore, Delvaux always presents us with a partial view of the action. There are few master-shots; instead we get glimpses of the action, the same glimpses that are vouchsafed to Govert Miereveld. We never see the barber shop, only the barber and his instruments (including the vibro-massager whose movement we are told resembles that of the electric oscillating saw used in the autopsy). We never see the assembly hall in which Franne's graduation ceremony takes place, only as much of it as Govert sees, and generally from an oblique angle, *his* angle. Even the music is never played by a full orchestra; tinkling pianos and harpsichord for the school ceremonies, harps for Franne in the hotel.

Delvaux has an absolute genius for choosing his locations: not only the school but the austere luxurious hotel that is the scene of Govert's downfall (or Assumption), the canals, the café near the cemetery, and finally the hotel room which is either Franne's or Govert's, with the dawn light coming mysteriously through the curtains, and the sounds of the carillon bells, the same ones with which the film begins.

In fact, his method might well be described as 'magic realism', and is in some

ways related to the paintings of his compatriots, Magritte and Paul Delvaux. They use an almost academic technique of painting in order to represent the fantastic, the unbelievable, the impossible. André Delvaux presents the fantastic in terms of an almost entomological portrayal of the everyday with, however, just the right number of details missing, to set in relief those that are there. And what better way to portray a man obsessed?

RICHARD ROUD

DUTCHMAN

ANTHONY HARVEY'S FILM, based very faithfully on LeRoi Jones' searing one-act play, gives us the collision of nightmares, black dreams, white fantasies twining and crashing together in a terrible crunch of violence. It opens at dawn on the New York subway, long deserted platforms, bare rails, naked steel curves like the system of Dante's Hell (title of a LeRoi Jones novel). A succession of held shots, almost stills, makes a chilling prelude to what will be a hot and dangerous day.

The first figure we see is striking. A long blonde is suddenly waiting on the empty platform. She wears a figure-clinging, insubstantial striped dress, heeled sandals that make her totter sexily, and huge sunglasses, turning her into a voracious wasp. A train draws in, with only one passenger, a young Negro in a tight-buttoned suit, smart, neat, compact. Their eyes meet, he looks at her belly, legs, she sizes him up greedily. The train moves off, and she's come into his carriage. We are about to witness a tormented tournament.

She comes towards him in the swaying train. She takes an apple out of her paper bag, stands by his seat sinking her teeth into it, into him, sits next to him. 'Weren't you staring at me through the window?' She begins to draw him out, she circles round him, climbs all over him with her words, leans across him, runs her hand up his leg, draws him on in a hundred different ways. Jones' dialogue is spare, edgy, catches perfectly the uneasy oscillation of attraction and resentment between white female and coloured male. LULA: *What are you prepared for?* CLAY: *I'm prepared for anything. How about you?* LULA (laughing loudly and cutting it off abruptly): *What do you think you're doing?* CLAY: *What?* LULA: *You think I want to pick you up, get you to take me somewhere and screw me, huh?* CLAY: *Is that the way I look?* LULA: *You look like you been trying to grow a beard. That's exactly what you look like. You look like you live in New Jersey with your parents and are trying to grow a beard. That's what. You look like you've been reading Chinese poetry and drinking luke-warm sugarless tea. You look like death eating a soda cracker.*

Like Cassius Clay, she dances away from him and he follows, and every time he pokes forward she's either not there or he runs into a sharp counter-blow. She plays with him relentlessly. Harvey films this whole first movement in long fluid takes, using a zoom lens to move in and out of their sparring-match. The threatening, electric silences grip us, and when the cuts come, when there is a change of camera position, they're placed acutely, like an uneasy shifting in the seat. It's almost a scientific documentary, and it's irresistible.

She makes him a proposition. He's going to a party, right? Will he take her? A

dangerous but exciting sexual complicity grows between them. LULA: *We'll pretend that we are both anonymous beauties smashing along through the city's entrails. (She yells as loud as she can) GROOVE!* Under-tones of murder and aggression blend in with the restless, neurotic sexuality of Shirley Knight's performance here. Cut to exterior of the train shooting headlong along the tracks. Back to the carriage. They've moved, his jacket's off, her head's on his shoulder, legs across his lap. She lulls him along with a come-on description of what they will do at the party. LULA: *And with my apple-eating hand I push open the door and lead you, my tender big-eyed prey, into my... what can I call it... into my hovel. But like all magic, this white witch's spell has a sting in its tail. LULA: Real fun in the dark house, high up above the street and the ignorant cowboys. I lead you in, holding your wet hand gently in my hand...* CLAY: *Which is not wet?* LULA: *Which is dry as ashes.* CLAY: *And cold?* LULA: *Into my dark living room. Where we'll sit and talk endlessly, endlessly.* CLAY: *About what?* LULA: *About what? About your manhood, what do you think? What do you think we've been talking about all this time?*

The camera pulls back, and we realise that there are other passengers, some white, some coloured, in shirtsleeves for the heat, with shopping bags, spectacles, newspapers. At first this intrusion of urban commuters into something so deeply private and shameful shocks us: we thought this was all a dream, without 'the real world'. But we wait to see what will happen, and something tells us that this nightmare the boy and girl are acting out is not private, it must explode in the real world.

And it does. She throws a hysterical fit of sexual challenge, screaming like a berserk virgin intoxicated with dreams of impossible orgasm, a mad evil Ophelia freaking out in a stream of primitive jelly-roll invective, mixing jazz-talk and sex-talk as she races round the carriage, hugging steel columns, shaking her body, daring him to come and screw her. And the commuters watch, half-embarrassed, half-hooked. The provocation

is intolerable. The Negro seizes her, slaps her down, and takes off, all his pent-up energy bursting out against her, to her, to all the spectators, in the carriage, in the cinema.

CLAY: *You wanted to do the belly rub?... Belly rub hates you. Old bald-headed four-eyed ofays popping their fingers... and don't know yet what they're doing... Charlie Parker? All the hip white boys scream for Bird. And Bird saying 'Up your ass, feeble-minded ofay! Up your ass!' And they sit there talking about the tortured genius of Charlie Parker. Bird would have played not a note of music if he just walked up to East 67th Street and killed the first ten white people he saw... All it needs is a simple knife-thrust. Just let me bleed you, you loud whore, and one poem vanished. The only thing that would cure the neurosis would be your murder... Crazy niggers turning their backs on sanity. When all it needs is that simple act. Murder. Just murder! Would make us all sane.*

The unspeakable has been spoken. Murder is the subject of this film. Pain and murder, it says, are the only ways white and coloured can recognise each other now. It's not simple, not just a Black Power slogan: we have seen it fester into truth before our eyes, and it makes us deeply uncomfortable, torn all ways. The last shameful act of this tragedy has still to be played: she stabs him dead, and with the help of her white fellow-travellers, the corpse is thrown out of the carriage. The tournament is over. The Negro has given satisfaction, and we spectators are ashamed. We can hardly bear to look at the epilogue, as she sidles up to another Negro, another day, in another empty carriage, and the whole white sorcery starts again. Harvey winds up the film with a sure touch, tracking back out of the carriage, which disappears into the dark, a fierce white rectangle of hatred.

The performances are so committed they are undeniable. Al Freeman Jr. plays the Negro with a quiet, almost mute vulnerability, and his big outburst has a magnificent dignity. Shirley Knight plays the girl with

"YESTERDAY GIRL": ALEXANDRA KLUGE.



an acute Actors' Studio precision, releasing a frightening storm of tension, contradiction. Gerry Turpin's photography catches the harsh sultry heat of the subway, and it's astonishing to realise the carriage was a Twickenham studio set. Anthony Harvey's achievement is to have translated LeRoi Jones' white-hot, black-fierce anecdote into a disturbing and enduring cinema image.

MICHAEL KUSTOW

YESTERDAY GIRL

YOU CAN PUT ANYTHING and everything into a film, you *must* put in everything, said Jean-Luc Godard in a recent interview. Alexander Kluge's *Yesterday Girl* (Contemporary) does just this, and in a way this is where it both succeeds and fails. Here is a remarkably comprehensive critical examination of contemporary West German society, yet so comprehensive, and at times so precise in its criticism, that its impact is in the end a little submerged by its details. Like Brecht's *Die Sieben Todsünden* (with which it has points of comparison), it finally says too much. But what it says is always interesting.

Comparisons with Brecht and Godard are inevitable. Like *Vivre sa Vie*, Kluge's film (his first, and based on a story in his book *Lebensläufe*) is the casebook of a girl, Anita G., at odds with the world around her, a collage of scenes set in apparently arbitrary juxtaposition. And Brechtian in format as well as in structure, with chapter-headings and titles which have the effect of interrupting the dramatic unfolding of Anita's story. But where Godard, by this device, revealed Nana's reaction to the world, in Kluge's film what we see is not Anita's reaction to other people but other people's lack of reaction to her.

Anita G. is, in fact, the catalyst through which Kluge's picture of modern Germany is revealed. She is also in herself something of a symbol of the two Germanies: she has known, as a Jew, something of the sickness of Hitler's Reich, fled East Germany after the war ("I was afraid"), and is now an innocent abroad in the mechanised jungle of the other side of the wall. All this we learn from the opening sequence, a courtroom interrogation where the camera concentrates not on Anita but on the judge, who in a few pointed exchanges exposes himself as a figure combining the attributes of a judge (close-up of his hands as he delves into a legal textbook to clear up a nice judicial point) and of a certain kind of standard West German ("Do you mean that events possibly observed in childhood... affect your situation today? Well, let's forget that—it's past."). He looks a very German judge, almost a parody of a non-German's idea of a German official. But he is also, clearly, Kluge's idea of a German judge. And this is the strength of the film: Kluge succeeds, where so many British directors have failed, in giving the feel of his own country, the reality behind the façade of the *Wirtschaftswunder*.

Part of that façade is the tyranny of officialdom, and the film assembles a gallery of cold official faces (some of them real) and gives them the rope to hang themselves. Anita meets them all, and they all react to her with blank, machine-like responses, since to them she is just another case, part of the day's work. The woman from the welfare service, for instance, who first congratulates her organisation for its



"GRAND PRIX".

idealism, then asks Anita to offer prayers with her in thankfulness for the work they've found for her; or the probation psychiatrist ("Form another concept"); or the bewildered political science professor at the university where Anita tries unsuccessfully to enrol in an effort to improve herself ("No doubt you know your Rousseau"). As in *Vivre sa Vie*, layer on layer is stripped off until the soul of the animal is laid bare. Here, though, it is the surface of a society that crumbles before us: we know little more of Anita at the end than we do at the beginning, but we know much more of the world she tries to come to terms with. Details are isolated, briefly and often elliptically. But never pointedly. The film is refreshingly free of the ring-master, crack-of-the-whip approach: Kluge simply makes his points and leaves us to draw our own conclusions.

"Jeder ist an allem schuld..." says the end-title: "Everyone is responsible for everything, but if we knew that we would have paradise on earth." In other words, Anita is everyone's concern. She may lie, cheat, steal, but what she needs is not to be admonished, corrected, but to elicit a reaction other than that of self-righteous disinterest—or self-interest, as in the case of Pichota, the minor Ministry official with whom she becomes involved. If Pichota can't help her, at least he can educate her (he reads her Kafka); but he soon tires of that. He does, though, take her to watch him at work (in a scene which illustrates perfectly the film's two levels of wry observation and critical comment), standing in heavy rain to exchange speeches with the leader of a dog-training club. "It would be desirable for all dogs to join our club," says the clubman. On the surface the whole thing is faintly ridiculous, but the words have, in another context, an uneasy ring of familiarity.

Detail upon detail, a mosaic of sketches dovetailing into an astonishingly revealing picture of a modern industrial society and its flimsy fabric. Yet somehow the picture is not complete, or perhaps too complete, partly because of an over-abundance of

detail, partly because Kluge is not yet the master of the range of cinematic vocabulary he uses. Some of the devices (speeded-up motion, oblique glimpses of fantasy, snippets of documentary-style interviews) simply don't come off; some of the improvisation looks a little too like improvisation; the pace is sometimes random and uneven, especially in the section devoted to Anita's final cross-country odyssey. All the same, for a first film it is surprisingly assured, and it does have much that works perfectly, not least the music (which effectively echoes Kurt Weill in its often deliberate banality), and as the pivot of the film Alexandra Kluge's utterly engaging performance. In the end, though, the most remarkable thing about *Abschied von Gestern* is that it is a German film, and the first German film for quite some years to make one want to see what its director does next.

DAVID WILSON

GRAND PRIX

FRANKENHEIMER'S PREOCCUPATION with the mechanics of his chosen subject has seldom been more noticeable than in *Grand Prix* (M-G-M), surely the most inquisitive film ever made about the business of motor-racing. He seizes the opportunities afforded by Cinerama to examine in piercing detail all the trappings and gadgetry of one of the most extrovert of sports—particularly the career of the cars themselves from their construction, fitting like monster girdles the exact proportions of their drivers, to their inevitable destruction as their bloodstained metalwork is clipped open for their victims to be removed.

The pompous brass band ceremonials, the greedy crowds, the casual hysteria of the pits, the masks, the gears, the roaring engines, the flag-waving, and the wreathed and oily champions—all the ritual is there, often startlingly divided by Frankenheimer with bursts of dazzling over-emphasis into

some two dozen mini-pictures filling his entire screen. Such additional reminders of his affection for the television image with its implications both of urgency and of detachment recur exuberantly throughout the film, even, less directly, in the staging of such scenes as James Garner's examination of his driving errors on 16mm., and Eva Marie Saint's watching of the final race an anguished distance away from the track.

Amid this splendid visual paraphernalia the story is a predictably rudimentary intrusion, punctuating the miles of footage of high-speed travel along screen-filling roads with an arbitrary succession of way-side halts for the soothing of fevered brows and the exchange of romantic unpleasantries. First symptoms of a plot arrive suddenly with Jessica Walter, for example, who appears to merit our disapproval by her attempts to sleep through the Monaco Grand Prix. It is several hairpin bends and a couple of crashes later before her relevance to the film is established, while that of Claude Dauphin, her companion for the scene, never becomes clear at all. Similar interludes demonstrating only a somewhat cursory interest on all sides are Yves Montand's fishing expedition, Brian Bedford's return to driving under the docile gaze of the domestics, and the peppery intrusion of Genevieve Page as a kind of updated Maria Casarès. Best of a battery of excellent performances in mostly thankless roles is that of Adolfo Celi as a bland, beaky impresario, all poise and glitter; by contrast, Toshiro Mifune, despite his distinguished grey temples, dapper moustache, and impressive scowl, tends to be swamped both by the language and by the script.

Yet *Grand Prix* is not exclusively a film for motorists and admirers of Yves Montand, who as usual contrives to be the most likeable character of them all. With the generous aid of Maurice Jarre's day-dreaming orchestra and the idolatrous photography by an army of cameramen under the control of Lionel Lindon, Frankenheimer occasionally takes off on a film-maker's fantasy of motor-racing—all multiple sunlit images, spiraling helicopter shots, slow-motion superimpositions, blurs of distant colour, and delicate summer sunshades glimpsed against the rich countryside that often seems to enfold the racing circuits. It's romanticism on a grand scale, a return to the baroque Frankenheimer of *All Fall Down*, and it makes Formula One racing look, quite remarkably, the most beautiful sport in the world. Probably it would have done much the same for marbles, but it nevertheless highlights the director's major achievement. From the sprawling chaos of an almost uncontrollable subject he has managed to fashion a controlled and coherent vision of his own.

PHILIP STRICK

FUNERAL IN BERLIN and THE DEADLY AFFAIR

BEHIND THE NOW FAMILIAR façade of government offices inhabited by furtive civil servants doling out counterfeit money and passports to laconic agents the Cold War looms even more oppressively than before, or so these two new films seem to indicate. If the spies are tired (and ennui now seems to be their chief stock-in-trade), they are also likely to be faced with situations that no self-respecting fictional spy

of the Thirties and Forties would have had anything to do with. Harry Palmer in *Funeral in Berlin* (Paramount), moodily created for the second time by Michael Caine, almost as if Alfie had been conscripted to a higher plane, lands himself in such a labyrinth of confused loyalties in divided Berlin that one ceases to care after a time whose side anyone is on. The main point of the film seems to be that the whole business is so soul-destroying that even the cynical Harry feels a qualm of conscience at the end. The point is a little too patly made for comfort, though: neither the script nor Guy Hamilton's direction is really explicit enough for the downbeat ending to carry much weight. And, as a study in modern espionage, surely those grim-jawed German heavies belong unequivocally to an earlier generation? Curiously enough, German actors from both East and West seem to love playing Nazis or Commies—the faces and heavy coats remain the same.

In *The Deadly Affair* (BLC/Columbia), most of the drama takes place in suburbia or gritty little offices; Hitchcock territory almost (notably the murder in the theatre scene), with Paul Dehn's concise, urbane script, which never puts the characters ahead of the audience's knowledge, making the most of a good story and deviating little from John le Carré's original. This time, the investigator is middle-aged and burdened with a promiscuous wife; his crisis comes when he discovers that a war-time comrade has moved to 'the other side'. Sidney Lumet brings to the material not so much a personal style as a kind of reliable American narrative sureness which allows the spectator to sit back and let the story exert its grip. Lumet (and his cameraman Fred Young) employs a muted colour style which is most successful in the exteriors and when it is not trying to look like black-and-white. Like other visitors, he contrives to make his English locations—Battersea in the rain—look slightly diffused and mysterious. These deliberately plain methods allow the script to speak for itself, but the shrewdness of the playing shows what Lumet can do with such wayward character actors as Roy Kinnear (who is never allowed to get away with anything), Harry Andrews, and Lynn Redgrave, whose little cameo is both funnier and sharper than any of her previous film work.

With Simone Signoret's appearance, the film makes its most serious jab at the con-

temporary conscience. War-torn, soiled and now betrayed, the character comes painfully to life as Signoret, majestically calm in Lumet's big close-ups, pours out her bitterness to James Mason's weary, insecure investigator—one's only regret is that she plays both her big scenes in the same low key. If she is a victim, so is the character played by Maximilian Schell, whose change of allegiance adds another dimension to the story which might have been further developed. As the spy films proliferate, one's interest seems to veer towards the men who really live in the shadows—like Oscar Homolka's fruity old Bolshevik colonel in *Funeral in Berlin*, who allegedly wants to defect in order to cultivate a sunny garden and live the rest of his life in peace. But few of the characters in either film actually tells the truth for any length of time. They are the turncoats, the counter-agents, the disillusioned ones soured even further by the rules of the Cold War. It would be interesting now to have a film which takes a systematic look at how they tick—and also why.

JOHN GILLET

THE EAVESDROPPER

THE SENSE OF PLACE has always been a strong and indeed determining element in the work of Leopoldo Torre Nilsson. For this film he has chosen the quarter around the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires which, once grand, became some thirty years ago the first port of call for emigrés from all countries, but particularly Spain. In those days, one café was taken over by Republicans, another by Franco supporters, and from the terraces they used to throw bottles at each other. But those heroic days are over. The Franco sympathisers have either gone back to Spain or become more Argentine than the Argentinians. One might imagine that the father of Martin Casals, main character in *The Eavesdropper* (Gala), was one of the latter. For this young man is a handsome, dedicated Fascist. A real one, trained for terrorist action. Forced by a temporary suspension of his activist group to hole up for a while, he chooses a blowy 1900-style hotel in the heart of the Plaza de Mayo district.

Amusingly enough, the hotel used in the film is now actually the main income tax office. All the shooting had to be done at night, everything cleared away next morning for the bureaucrats. One can imagine such a situation appealing very much to Beatriz Guido, on whose novel the film is based, as well as to Torre Nilsson. For, as has often been noted, theirs is a baroque sensibility which feeds on paradox, contradiction and the bizarre. However, this sensibility is conditioned (justified, maybe, in their own minds) by an equally pressing concern for social problems. The greatest among these, for obvious reasons, is the spread of underground fascism in post-war Argentina. In this film, their best in many years, they have happily combined their obsession with the claustrophobic universe and their concern with democracy. Particularly satisfying is the new twist: in the earlier films, the person, usually a girl, could find liberation only by breaking out of her prison. Here, the main character walls himself up for safety, and when he is forced to leave the room, it is his defeat, his downfall.

The hotel, largely inhabited by Spanish

SIMONE SIGNORET IN "THE DEADLY AFFAIR".



Republican refugees, is for Martin a symbol of all he finds wrong with his country. He imagines that these quite harmless Spaniards are concocting a vicious plot against the state visit of a neighbouring dictator. Once he gets this idea, every innocent detail feeds his obsession. His denunciation brings the police, who find only a few miserable wet-back refugees who have been hidden there. Martin in turn is denounced and driven from the hotel.

So far, so good: in fact, great. Somewhat less persuasive is the subplot which revolves around Inés, a childhood friend of Martin, whom he persuades to share his exile in the hotel. She is meant to be innocently unaware of his activities at first, only gradually coming to understand the depths of his obsessive nationalism. However, a girl who would be innocent enough not to know what kind of a man Martin was in the first place, would be too unsophisticated politically to be very much upset when she did find out. This is perhaps an unimportant weakness, but it does help to explain why Janet Margolin has such a hard time doing anything with the character. In any case, Martin is more fascinating in his evil. The fascination he exerts may be meant to serve as a warning of the superficial blandishments of Fascism, or it could have resulted from the inevitable creeping seduction exercised by the character on Torre Nilsson and Miss Guido. In any case, Stathis Giallelis, so narcissistically directed by Kazan in *America, America* (*The Anatolian Smile*) is here superbly, commandingly evil. He is solidly supported by members of the Torre Nilsson stock company (Lautaro Murua, Leonardo Favio) as well as by the brilliant diamond-black photography. It should be made clear that all of the above applies to the Spanish language version of the film, the one approved by its director. Even Janet Margolin said to me that, although she naturally did miss hearing her own voice, this was by far the better of the two versions.

RICHARD ROUD

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS (BLC/Columbia) was presented on the stage in a style which Robert Bolt himself called "bastardised Brecht." His adaptation of his own play discards the alienation device, a character who commented on the action from within, and omits the visual shorthand by which scenes were kept on the move. Whether the rather conventionally straightforward narrative treatment which results is more suitable for the screen is arguable, but it effectively focuses attention on the central conflict and is admirably suited to Fred Zinnemann's sincere and unaffected direction. Wherever a new scene (usually wordless) has been added to the play however (Wolsey's death, the Royal progress up river, a wedding feast for Anne Boleyn), the effect is of picture-book pageantry which is flat and oddly distracting. Fortunately there is little of this, and Zinnemann has wisely resisted any temptation to go in for spectacle at the expense of meaning. Nevertheless there are visual splendours—Hampton Court, looking suitably and garishly new, is contrasted with the leafy calm of More's Chelsea house, and both are firmly placed by the ever-present river.

Bolt has described Sir Thomas More as



JANET MARGOLIN IN "THE EAVESDROPPER".

"a man with an adamant sense of his own self." He was a subtle, sophisticated and prudent man, flexible enough to bend before political storms and learned enough to use his lawyer's wit against intolerable pressure. The King's uneasy conscience badly needed More's unequivocal approval of his marriage to Anne Boleyn, and the ex-Chancellor's deliberate silence was, in Cromwell's phrase, "bellowing up and down Europe." But to approve the marriage was to acknowledge Henry's new status as head of the church, and More was a loyal Catholic. In defence of that inner self which he knew as his immortal soul and which we might more prosaically describe as his personal integrity, he cheerfully yielded his life.

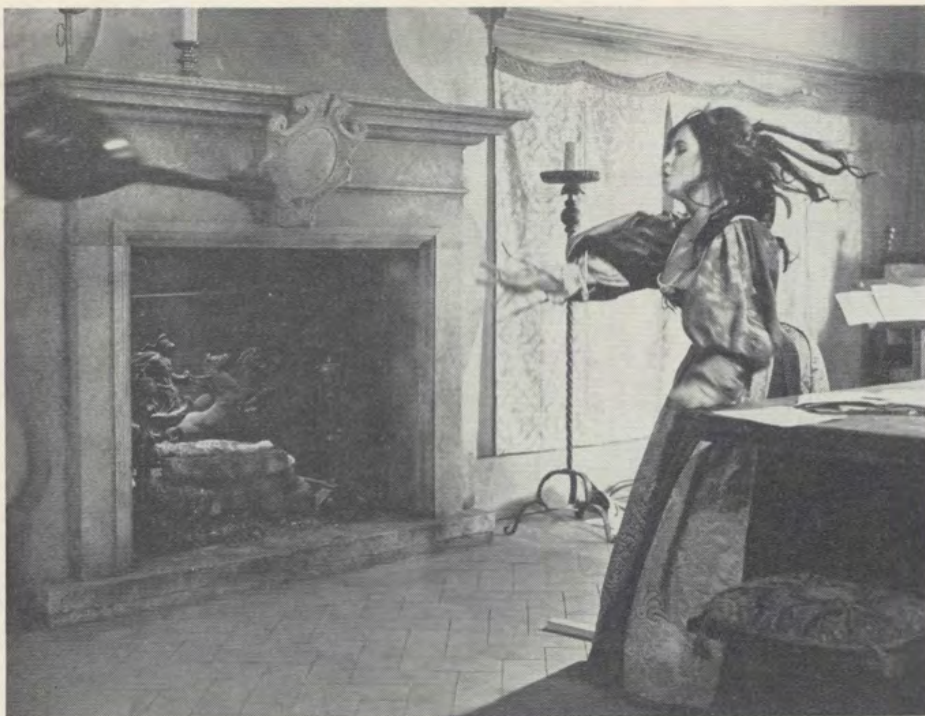
The complicated legal arguments by which he rebutted Cromwell's attempts to incriminate him, and the care he took to see that his family were not implicated, emerge with absolute clarity from the script. So does the atmosphere of tyranny personified by the King. Henry himself, in the person of Robert Shaw, is a glittering, lecherous young lion—a handsome but dangerous animal whose sudden paranoiac rages make his absolute power a matter of almost tangible terror. Leo McKern's Cromwell is a paunchy plebeian with a malicious eye on the main chance, and Orson Welles makes a typical larger-than-life appearance as Cardinal Wolsey. There are striking performances too by Wendy Hiller, as More's bewildered wife, and Nigel Davenport as the hearty, amiable Norfolk. But the film must stand or fall with More, and Paul Scofield, repeating his stage performance, provides a still, calm centre to the vortex of treachery. If he has a fault, it is on the side of austerity. This witty, unwilling martyr loved life so well that one feels he might have been a little merrier in his prime. Like all Zinnemann's best films this is a story of moral conflict and personal victory; his respect for his material and his players allows that victory real nobility.

BRENDA DAVIES

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

WATCHING THE EDGES of a Zeffirelli production is always a delight. His tableaux are exquisitely composed, his use of movement imaginative, and for once the extras are energetic and enthralled. You can even imagine that these people inhabit the sets, with their children and their dogs. But this is not the imaginative condition of watching an Elizabethan play. True, this is a film, not a play, and must be judged on its own terms, but no one with an understanding of the relation of the parts to the whole in a successful work could effectively hope to make a good film using the playwright's words in so significantly altered a setting.

It must be said that were it not for Shakespeare's lines (without which the scriptwriters would be 'at a loss', the credits tell us) this *Taming of the Shrew* (BLC/Columbia) could be a most engaging trifle. Far from being at a loss, the film's most successful moments in fact come between the lines, when Zeffirelli explores a story-book Padua, full of charming pageantry. But when all this is consigned to the background, it takes Zeffirelli's good taste with it, and in the foreground we are treated to the other aspect of his productions, weary farce, tasteless caricature, and a hysteria of grimaces. The central relationship fails because Elizabeth Taylor's Kate is too shallow to make a worthwhile conquest for even the most penurious Petruchio (though the production stresses apologetically that he is only doing it for the money). It is a shrill performance, offering Burton no challenge. By way of balance, Burton undermines the wit of the piece, playing Petruchio as a drunken peasant who owns land but sups with his slaves, rather than a swain fallen on bad times. The poetry and the flamboyance are not wholly missing, merely a little damp. Of the supporting cast, the young lovers are dull, and the comics more hysterical than funny.



"THE TAMING OF THE SHREW": ELIZABETH TAYLOR AS KATE.

Only Michael Hordern as Baptista sustains the grotesquerie with success. But even these successes, verse from Burton, farce dotage from Hordern, are no kin of the material *mise-en-scène*, the detail of the sets, the extras with faces out of Renaissance portraiture.

And yet, if the film had offered a Shrew with character, it would have been an entertaining story, disorganised and often vulgar, but very pretty to watch... This is hardly a re-creation of the 16th century, Padua warts and all, but it is imaginative, and permits one to dream about the Renaissance with renewed excitement. Zeffirelli's next film project is *Romeo and Juliet* as a *cinéma-vérité* documentary (his words) on Renaissance Verona. Which takes us back to the very first point: one can't help feeling that only a man without a concept of the way parts of an art work relate to the whole could cherish this ambition; or a man who neither understands nor profoundly likes Shakespeare for what he is.

CAREY HARRISON

A COUNTESS FROM HONG KONG

THE SUBJECT OF *A Countess from Hong Kong* (Rank) is fairy-tale bedroom farce of the most basic trouser-dropping kind, with married but otherwise eligible diplomat trying to do what's right by the voluptuous stowaway in his luxury cabin amid scenes of wild panic whenever there's a ring at the door. There's an imperturbable valet, and a drunk scene, and a ballroom scene and an embarrassment-about-the-bathroom scene, and of course there's the seasickness bit

when everyone dashes about looking for portholes. Just possibly it could all have worked twenty years ago (when Chaplin made *Monsieur Verdoux* instead) in the hands of Lubitsch, say, or Wilder or Hawks—someone who would have crisped up the dialogue and given teeth to the actors. But Chaplin's great talent has always been his ability to direct himself, and with a film in which he makes only a fleeting appearance this ability has scant relevance. Sadly, what could well be his last film serves best to illustrate that Chaplin's line in comedy is uniquely his own. Applied to others it becomes no more than a series of elaborations on the theme of personal discomfiture and persistent puncturing of human dignity. The moral may remain but the fun is lost.

Further, *Countess from Hong Kong* is a painful reminder that Chaplin's technique as a film-maker has never been remarkable; his use of the camera is merely functional, his film could be in black and white for all the advantage he takes of colour, and his musical score maintains the same strident level throughout. To make matters worse, his production team appears to have betrayed him—despite the splendid sets, the film is little short of ugly, with poor continuity, long-winded editing, and a frigid glare from the lighting that chills the life out of any acting before it even begins. Through the bleakness the actors mug away conscientiously ("This is the first real happiness I've known," grits Brando faintly through his teeth) but only Margaret Rutherford, securely at home in her own familiar chaos, captures anything like genuine comedy.

By the time the final dance scene, an interminable echo of the first, comes round to make what appears to be a point about pointlessness, one can only wish that Chaplin, with something like eighty films to his credit, had not bothered with the eighty-first.

PHILIP STRICK

FILM CLIPS

GEORGE SIDNEY, I DISCOVER from reading his official biography, is a still-photographer of international standing, a notable marksman, vice-president of Hanna-Barbera cartoons, owner of a pipe tobacco factory, president of the Directors' Guild for 14 of the last 16 years, film consultant for the Atomic Energy Commission and the U.S. Department of Defense, and has been given an honorary doctorate for his work with the Institute of Cardiovascular Research. He also studied at Pittsburgh Musical Institute and plays piano, clarinet, violin and saxophone. In addition to all of which he has somehow found time to turn out a continuous succession of films for some thirty years. In prospect he sounds rather alarming, but the man himself, caught somewhere in the seventh month of shooting on *Half a Sixpence*, turned out to be the height of amiability, relaxed, confidently in control of the whole vast machine—the film has grown from modest beginnings to a super-production boasting some of the largest indoor sets ever built in Europe—and clearly able to get just what he wants without ever raising his voice.

There is, of course, nothing like a solid grounding in Pete Smith featurettes, followed by some fourteen years as a contract feature director at M-G-M, for giving this sort of confidence: it comes with the knowledge that the director could, and if he would, do practically every technical job on set single-handed. About his years with M-G-M Sidney's feelings seem to be mixed. "M-G-M was the real elite; you felt that if you said casually 'I'm with M-G-M' it really meant something. And it did. Whatever anyone said about Louis B. Mayer, he was a great showman. If he thought some detail was less than ideal—a girl who appeared incidentally in a scene wasn't as pretty as she might be, say—he'd tell you to reshoot it with the detail put right, never mind the expense. And he'd take chances with people: I was directing tests and shorts at M-G-M when I was eighteen, and I had plenty of chance to see what trouble he would take to bring on new talent. He'd suddenly appear on set while a test was being shot, and whisper to me 'How is she? What do you think?' And he'd listen, and if I said 'I don't know...' With more time maybe..." he'd always say 'Take it; take as long as you need.

But don't tell anyone I told you. One of these days you're going to find me a star."

"The only thing about M-G-M was that we were, I guess, a little over-protected. We were there under a glass roof, with all this fantastic technical team in back of us, and so the studio look, the look of the team, tended to come first. With a lot of M-G-M films of the Forties you'd know at once they were M-G-M, but you'd find it difficult to say who directed them."

Was this why there was such a marked difference of style between his M-G-M films and the first three for Columbia, *The Eddie Duchin Story*, *Jeanne Eagels* and *Pal Joey*? "Partly, yes. I guess the desire to do things my own way, to make films which would look the way I wanted them instead of how the studio wanted them to look, had been nagging at me. And then Harry Cohn was an extraordinary man. People either loved him or hated him, and many of the most awkward, difficult people loved him. The reason was that he was very decisive and extreme in his decisions. If he didn't think you had any talent he had no time for you at all; if he thought you were talented he would give you an absolutely free hand. He reckoned this always paid off in the long run, and events seemed to prove him right."

"So with those three films I did just what I wanted: the only hazard was the laboratories. You know, they're always so helpful that they can sometimes help you out of your mind. If you label a can 'Night' you can be sure that someone, to help you, will bump up the light in processing so that it comes out bright as midday. When we'd shot the rainy scenes in *Eddie Duchin*, Harry Stradling and I were scared to send them to the labs for fear of what they'd do to help us out. Finally we hid them in my room until we had an enormous batch of normally lit film and then sent it all together so that they would have to rush it all through in the usual way. Even so when the studio saw those dark, rainy scenes in a widescreen, colour film, they thought we were crazy. But funnily they are the bits people always remember."

We talked about *Who Was That Lady?*, which ran him into unlikely schedule trouble. "You see, we got the stars set, and the script tied up, and then I went to them and said 'How would you like me to shoot this picture in ten days?' And they had fits, and said 'Think of the stars. Think of the stature of this project. How about sixty days?' So I said, 'Sixty days? We'd all be bored to distraction. How about twenty?' They said fifty, I said thirty, and we settled on forty. But really, I'm happier the faster I can shoot, particularly in comedy, where so much depends on keeping everything bubbling. So in the end I shot it in 27 days anyway. I've never had so much fun on a picture, but the finished result never seemed to me quite to make it. It's almost a very good farce indeed, but there's something wrong. Too little real feeling, too much real feeling... I don't know. But it was a real ball to do."

As I leave he is busy manoeuvring a veteran car in and out of the gates of the aforementioned largest set ever etc. And expressing doubts about the wider screen processes ("I do like a bit of top"). And looking forward to the promised return of 3D without glasses ("If you could have seen *Kiss Me Kate* as it looked in Metro's private theatre, with no expense spared to make conditions ideal... And just think what 3D could do with a set like this..."). And holding forth on the visual quality which could be achieved with 2½ by 2½ frame

back-projected with a very short throw, if only anyone would spend a little money just on quality. And approving set designs. And talking with a lady who manages his tobacco business back in the States. And finalising plans for a big layout of his own London photographs. And getting shot after shot into the can with an absolute minimum of fuss and bother. "Well," he says philosophically, "Someone has to clear the way for *Oliver*."

I SUPPOSE IT WAS BOUND to happen. When the popular papers consider it a suitably newsy headline to label a story simply "Cathy Come Home Writer to Script Film," when even the Cardinal-Archbishop of Westminster is moved to assure his flock (going out on a limb somewhat, one could imagine, with a British flock) that we should worry more about *Cathy Come Home* than about the state of Arkle's health, obviously the moment for a new invasion of the British cinema from television has fallen due.

Georgy Girl, directed by Silvio Narizzano, looks like being the harbinger of a new television-bred wave of directors (if we don't date it all from the advent of Dick Lester, the one swallow who has taken a surprisingly long time to make a summer). Joe McGrath has survived his outing as the first of seven or so directors to pilot *Casino Royale* this way and that, and has now completed *Thirty is a Dangerous Age*, *Cynthia*. His near namesake John McGrath is scripting Malraux's *La Condition Humaine* for Fred Zinnemann. Philip Saville's big-screen career did not get off to a very auspicious start with *Stop the World, I Want to Get Off*, but no doubt more will be heard of him in more favourable circumstances. Peter Watkins' first cinema film, *Privilege*, is impending (set up after his TV film *The War Game* had unexpectedly made its first appearance in cinemas instead). Kenneth Loach, director of the once-renowned *End of Arthur's Marriage*, and of *Up the Junction*, has been signed up by Joseph

Janni. Ken Russell is directing the third Harry Palmer adventure.

And so on. But I can't help wondering how it may turn out. The argument for recruiting television talent in America a few years back was that while the cinema stagnated television was the real creative growing-point, the medium where people were willing—or compelled—to try something new. But the situation is different here. Television tends, after all, to live much more in its own little world, ruled by its own special and to the outside world mysterious standards. In the last year or two, for instance, there has been a sudden reversion to a sort of dramatic construction which one thought had gone for ever after the sound camera was liberated from its soundproof booth.

At least a quarter, often a third and sometimes nearly half of every television play with any pretensions seems to be taken up with running up and down stairs, with getting in and out of cars or driving round in them aimlessly, or with endless montage sequences. Why? One wonders, waiting impatiently for the drama proper to start again. Because, comes the answer, the boring, irrelevant bits are *film*, and the advancedness and enterprise of any particular dramatic production is judged largely by its proportion of film to tape. And anyway, television directors continue hopefully, think how exciting it is, how it makes all the difference, that the cameras have got out of the studio to record real people getting into real cars in real streets; there's a breakthrough for you!

Whether the general public, not unused to seeing real people getting into real cars, finds it quite so exciting is another matter, and one seldom gone into. The television critics generally content themselves with accepting as new and revolutionary whatever the company handouts (particularly BBC) tell them is new and revolutionary. But how will this curiously private view of what constitutes liveliness and novelty in visual story-telling work out in the big pond of the cinema? And how will the television

TOMMY STEELE AS KIPPS IN GEORGE SIDNEY'S "HALF A SIXPENCE".



directors' beloved experimental bits seem once out of this very specialised context?

One of our leading Sunday television critics, after praising Philip Saville's shatteringly pretentious and derivative *Exit 19* for its daring originality, was moved to add that those of his friends who went to the cinema told him that something of the sort was occasionally to be seen there, but he could not answer for that and did not feel it was a matter of vital import. Directors trying the same sort of thing in the cinema itself will not find critics so docile and easy to please. Nor will they be impressed, as so many people inside and outside the BBC were recently, by a production like Jack Gold's *The Lump*, because it is made entirely on location (and on film).

Of course, one wishes the new directors recruited from television well. But I wonder if everybody involved is sufficiently aware of how far British television is a creative backwater, and how much the new men from it will have to start all over again. The critical reception of the BBC's series of original films *Six*, when shown a couple of years ago at the London Film Festival and judged for once by cinema critics in a broader film context, might well, if any hopeful producer remembered it, give him pause.

"HARASSMENT," HE SAID. "It's all to avoid harassment. You see, if you get in and out again quick enough they don't have time." "Here?" "Oh no, not here; in the States. Here our problems are quite different. Here you have a censor." The subject of this exchange, as you may have guessed, was *Ulysses*, Joseph Strick's film of, and his running battle with the censors of the world, the principal manoeuvre in which has been the on the face of it extraordinary one of generally releasing the film for three days only and then withdrawing it except for private bookings.

There is, however, method in Mr. Strick's madness. Very much so as far as the States

are concerned. "You see, there are now only six communities in the States which have official censorship—the City of Chicago, the State of Maryland, four more. Up to now no one has had the time, the patience, and particularly the money to fight them through the courts on the subject. Meanwhile, the rest of the country supposedly enjoys freedom from censorship. The trouble is, there are ways and ways. There are a thousand-and-one perfectly legal ways—fire regulations, for instance—of bringing to bear an unofficial, unavowed form of censorship, and nothing you can do about it. Except play your film and be off before they know what hit them. Hence the three-day blanket release. Before they can start harassing, the film has played, and that is that."

"But isn't that a very uneconomical way to do things in Britain?" I ask. "And surely you still have to have the film passed by at least one of the responsible bodies?" "Well, we'll see how that works out. We've already (February, this was) got fourteen cinemas to agree to show the film in whatever form they can legally do so. Now I have to get a certificate, because it was part of my original agreement with British Lion that I should. They had to take this assurance to the bankers. And I had to put up a £20,000 deposit in the bank, in cash, as a guarantee."

"I've been in correspondence with Trevelyan since the inception of the project, and I've had a number of extraordinary exchanges with him. Initially, he objected particularly to some supposed *double entendres* so intricate and obscure I doubt if even Joyce thought of them, any suggestion that human beings occasionally urinate and defecate, and even the most harmless things like a remark, in the middle of an extravagant comic rigmarole description of someone, that he has lost his hair owing to self-abuse. But finally the cuts he wants are two visuals—a moment of voyeurism and the final image of Mollie and Bloom making love—and about two or three hundred words from the soundtrack. I suppose the censors are worried primar-

ily because they think *Ulysses* has a popular reputation as a 'dirty book', and anything they let past will be very thoroughly scrutinised. What I'm trying to do is to keep them reminded that *Ulysses* also has the reputation of a classic of twentieth-century literature.

"I'm making the cuts, so that we have a certificated version for the record, and then it goes to the various local authorities in the original version. For the cut version, I'm not going to play the censors' game by smoothing everything over so that you would never know a cut had been made. It'll be quite clear where anything has been cut—there'll be a blank soundtrack, an empty screen—or even maybe an insert picture of Mr. Trevelyan for every frame he wants removed. And we'll hand out a brochure with the cut lines put in context and stills of the cut shots."

"But how about the economics of the thing," I pursued. "Won't the cost of prints . . . ?" "No, no. That's one of the oldest fallacies in the film business. A black-and-white print of a film like *Ulysses* costs only about £80. So the cost of prints is a drop in the bucket compared with what a company would expect to spend on exploitation. And in the process you gain so much. Look: the critics don't, I think, make any noticeable difference to the attendances of any films except specialised attractions. Borderline cases. Take something like Welles's *The Trial*. Not by any means a total success, but an interesting film for many reasons. The critics gave it a lot of space, even while finding all sorts of faults with it. It could never possibly be a big hit, but there must have been people all over the country who read those reviews and thought it sounded interesting. If they could have gone out there and then to see it, they would have. But months later? Of course they don't. That's where gradual release with a very few copies is false economy. The important thing is to get a film in that sort of class—*The Balcony* I think was another—out as quickly and as widely as possible.

"If you play it for a short concentrated run you get further advantages. You concentrate your audience: they make a special effort. British Home Entertainments have proved this over and over with their one-day, two-day releases; so have Rank with their opera and ballet films. Even the *Balcony*/*Caretaker* double bill . . . It didn't break any records, but it played 45 Rank cinemas and did well enough for Rank, when they tried a similar release pattern with *Lord of the Flies*, but that book that into a hundred cinemas. The specialised audience is there, if it can be got at. It's difficult, so long as the big companies don't want to know about films like *The Balcony*, which cost £60,000 and made £30,000 profit. But some of us go on trying. If *Ulysses* is a flop, I guess I can always go back to marketing electronic equipment until I raise enough money to try again . . ."

JOSEPH STRICK ON SET WITH MAURICE ROEVES, WHO PLAYS STEPHEN DAEDALUS.



AS A FOOTNOTE TO my comment last time that people so often seem to get filmmakers' names wrong, Mr. M. F. Pride of Durham sends this quote from *The Times*: "The people likely to have been hit most seriously by the Rio floods are those living in the shacks that cluster on and around the steep hillsides . . . the poorer people that Albert Camus filmed in *Black Orpheus* . . ."

ARKADIN



meets **MURIEL**

Francis Lacassin

ANY AMOUNT OF CRITICAL analysis has been devoted to Resnais the film-maker. Not much has been written about the founder and vice-president of the Centre for the Study of the Literature of Graphic Expression and member of the editorial board of *Giff-Wiff*, the first magazine in the world devoted to the history and documentation of the comic strip. All the same, it's the comic strip enthusiast in Resnais who preceded, awakened and nourished the film director.

It wasn't the fugitive images on the local cinema screens but the fixed images of the strips that gave young Alain ideas about the direction of actors, about techniques of montage and film assembly, long before he entered I.D.H.E.C. The ruined château at Vannes, the old harbour, where old people and young mothers took their afternoon walks, didn't offer much outlet to the imagination of a child forced by indifferent health to spend much of his time alone. His parents were unhappy to find him reading trashy comics apparently populated by stepmothers, drunks, cripples and cross-eyed girls. They gave him instead the centre pages of *Dimanche Illustré*, across which, in pink and blue, ran the pranks of Bicot, his sister Suzy, and their friends Jules, Ernest and Gustave. They seemed to him to live in a magical world, coloured by a gently ironic humour, where the children earned their own money and spent it on the odd implements required by their bizarre games.

Some years later, around Easter 1932, Resnais encountered his own Madeleine—not in the form of a little cake, but the Paris church, on the steps of which he bought from a paper-seller a copy of the colour section of the *Sunday News*. Flicking through it, he recognised with some surprise Bicot, Suzy and the rest, talking an alien language and equipped with unknown names (Perry, Winnie

and Winkle); and so discovered what he felt must be a deception which *Dimanche Illustré* was practising on its readers in keeping this fact from them. Most of the paper seemed too grown up for him. But he found one strip fascinating: a detective, Dick Tracy, at odds with a gang who were spreading poison gas through the horn of a phonograph. Here, briefly glimpsed, was a new dramatic world. But it wasn't until 1936 that Resnais again caught up with Dick Tracy, his favourite hero.

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In the meantime, the world of French children's comics had drastically changed. Paul Winkler, whose agency had French rights in most of the principal American strips, launched his *Journal de Mickey* in Autumn 1934. This and Winkler's other magazines were distinguished from their predecessors by their grander format and better quality colour and printing, as well as by the introduction of familiar screen characters (Mickey, Popeye, Felix the Cat, Jungle Jim) and American narrative techniques. Captions under pictures were replaced by the now familiar balloons: dialogue had become part of action. And within months a 30-year-old tradition of French comics had been superseded.

One of Winkler's magazines, *Robinson*, introduced Resnais to science fiction—though he didn't know that was what he was reading, and in fact science fiction novels only reached France in 1954. Resnais could never again finish a Jules Verne novel after devouring in *Robinson* the picture images of Guy l'Eclair (Flash Gordon) confronting, on the Planet Mongo, the implacable Ming. Or those of Mandrake, the elegantly old-world magician, on his visits to the other side of the moon. He was intrigued by the journeys of Luc Bradefer (Buck Bradford) in a miniature sphere through the worlds encompassed by

the atoms in a coin; and startled that his hero, after a month of voyaging, could manage to reappear in his laboratory only seconds after leaving it, since the contraction of space also involved a contraction of time.

So, in 1937, the remote gods Resnais longed to approach were not movie stars or film-makers, but the men who wrote and drew the adventures of Flash Gordon, Mandrake and Dick Tracy. He had a feeling that this mightn't be easy. A few words left untranslated, a half-obliterated signature, seemed to indicate that these artists could be foreigners. To check up, he went to Paris, to Number 7, Rue de la Paix, and asked to see Paul Winkler. For some reason, Winkler agreed to meet this 15-year-old who was endeavouring to pose as a professional illustrator. The young caller, having verified his suspicions, was shown some original sketches, four or five times the size of the printed versions. And comparison of French and American papers which published the same strips brought sad disillusion.

The French versions, often in different colours, seemed to have been mutilated, chopped up or reframed to adapt them to the papers' format. He realised that the strips owed their attraction to such things as editing, careful framing, actual choice of scenes. The strip narrative works through discontinuity, unlike cinema and in imitation of theatre. He also felt that, in their stylisation and composition, the images were allied to painting. Cinema, painting, theatre: all three seemed linked in the conception of the strips, which he was now determined to encounter in their original, integral form.

On the pretext that it would help his English, he persuaded his father to subscribe to American papers. Unimportant that, in three months, he had progressed from last place to first in his English class. The main thing was that, among thousands of boys who were following Mandrake's adventures without knowing or caring that they were getting a travesty of the American original, here was Resnais standing out for the comic strip in its uncut, undubbed form—as he was later to stand out for films.

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In 1941, America's entry into the war meant the abrupt disappearance of his papers. "Undoubtedly that's the reason I became anti-Fascist," says Resnais. "If it hadn't been for Hitler, what a collection I might have had!" The evaporation of one dream world meant the substitution of another: the cinema—the other form of narrative in pictures—which was now to preoccupy him. Unable to create comic strips, since he couldn't draw, Resnais decided that he would become a film director. In strong characters, frustration is sublimated in creative action. In 1942, he went to

Paris to embark on—and quickly give up—a course at I.D.H.E.C., the film school.

The Liberation brought G.I.s whose pockets bulged with comic books. A chance to try to complete and reconstruct the lost adventures. But a difficult task, typical of the frustrations which assail all *aficionados* of this art. ("Like trying to plug the holes in a Gruyère cheese," Resnais says glumly.) Anyhow, he had become a film-maker, though the satisfaction of this new trade didn't undermine his old affections. For him comic strips weren't just a source of amusement, a part of childhood, but a genuine art of images. But to whom could he admit this without being laughed at? To, as it turned out, a young man whom he met while they were parking their bicycles in the yard of a student centre in the Rue des Beaux Arts. A young man who was at that time a novelist, wasn't yet calling himself Chris Marker, and, unlike Resnais, wasn't wearing bicycle-clips.

An excitable harangue in the corner of the cycle yard one day introduced them to a young Italian design student, who was showing off sketches by Oscar Dominguez for a new strip in a children's paper which never saw the light of day. This was Remo Forlani, who wrote the scenarios for some of Resnais' early films. And at the time that he was preparing his series *Visite à des Peintres* (Dominguez among them), Resnais was also spending several hours each week in the cellars of the American Embassy, carefully clipping out pages of comic strips under the impatient eye of a boilerman who had promised not to burn the piles of newspapers before he got there.

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Meanwhile, he and Forlani were planning various films based on comic strips, none of which actually materialised. First a series of 16 mm. shorts after the adventures of cowboy Red Ryder, for filming in the Bois de Boulogne. Then a full-length colour feature based on one of the Tintin stories, *L'Île Noire*, in which the actors were to have worn masks designed by Hergé. But only one of their films was actually to include a comic strip reference. And this was the film to which Forlani gave, despite Resnais' reservations, the resounding title *Toute la Mémoire du Monde*—so laying, incidentally, the first stone in his unwanted legend as the film-maker of memory. The attentive spectator may note that, among all the treasures and glories of the Bibliothèque Nationale which the film records, there's a fleeting shot of a pile of papers—issues of Mandrake and Dick Tracy.

Resnais is rather pleased that this aside, far from passing unobserved, actually contributed to the founding of the Club des Bandes Dessinées. When I saw *Toute la Mémoire du Monde* at a provincial film society show, what



"TOUTE LA MEMOIRE DU MONDE": MANDRAKE AT THE BIBLIOTHEQUE NATIONALE.

lingered in my mind was not the formal beauty of the film, but a memory of this one shot. I wasn't alone: we weren't alone, all those of us who secretly felt that the comic strip was a means of expression as deserving of attention as any other. Here the creator of some of the best films ever made about painting was announcing the same thing, discreetly but unequivocally, when he so deliberately noted this rarity among the incunabula of the Bibliothèque. And I knew, having accidentally lost my own collections, that it's far easier to pick up back issues of rare surrealist pamphlets limited to only fifty copies than of papers which count their circulations in hundreds of thousands.

It wasn't until 1954 that I managed to ask Resnais the shelf number of the Mandrake collection so fleetingly noticed in the film. But he couldn't say, and still can't. It was housed at the Bibliothèque Nationale only during the actual shooting. Resnais, one might note for the record, had supplied it from his own collection.

The disclosure of this stratagem, and our enthusiasm for the same strips, cemented an alliance. When in 1962 the magazine *Fiction* yielded to its readers' insistence and announced the formation of the Club des Bandes Dessinées, I naturally proposed Resnais for president. Obstinate modesty, he would only agree to act as vice-president, and hesitated for a couple of years before joining the editorial board of our magazine *Giff-Wiff*, whose first editor was Remo Forlani. Where he didn't hesitate was in lending us the prestige of his name, and helping us by contacting Paul Winkler (just 25 years after his original visit) and some of the leading American agents and illustrators.

Resnais, among us all, is the most erudite exponent of comic strip history,

thanks to his retentive memory and the selective quality of his collection. The original authors no longer possess some of their own sketches. But Resnais has his records; and it's thanks to these that we were able to reassemble a Flash Gordon serial left unfinished in *Robinson* at the outbreak of war, so ending 22 years of suspense for loyal readers. Also, Resnais has helped bring our opinions up to date, tearing us away from stagnation among the 'classics' and persuading us that the comic strip is an art which renews itself every day and that our interest should extend to other forms of expression which reflect its influence—pop art, for instance. Hence the Centre d'Etude des Littératures d'Expression Graphique.

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Since comic strips have so influenced Resnais' private life, why hasn't he filmed them? He now feels that this is an autonomous art form, self-sufficient, available to everyone, and capable of reaching a larger public than that of television and cinema combined. So it would be pointless to inflict on it the inevitable betrayals and hardships of adaptation. The comic strip, an unrealistic medium where sound is expressed by way of graphics, and narrative by way of discontinuity, couldn't but be seriously damaged by transposition to a realistic medium, where sound is no less relevant than picture and the narrative obeys its own time continuity. So, in spite of the wishes of Lee Falk, creator of the Mandrake strip, Resnais has turned down the offer to direct a Mandrake film planned by an Italian company.

At a theoretical level, on the other hand, Resnais is much interested in the reciprocal borrowings between films and comic strips, particularly in story-telling

techniques. He even argues that the strips preceded the cinema in discovering and using the close-up, the Cinema-Scope image and the tracking shot. He is seduced as much by the filmic conception of certain strips as by films whose fantasies of theme or character betray the influence of the ninth art on the seventh.

Some people may be sorry that they can't see dazzlingly clear parallels between his work and his private passion. But this leaves them the more esoteric satisfaction of researching what connections they may find. Resnais' films are charged with intense emotion and even their quietest images are dynamic: which can be explained in terms of their fragmented structure. The plot extends in the ellipses between the scenes—which are like white spaces separating the drawings in a strip. Intensity of expression answers to economy of means. Resnais, the film-maker of memory but even more the film-maker of time, sets to work to enslave and then destroy the notion of time unfolding. Looking at his work from this angle, one can maybe briefly suggest certain leads which researchers might care to follow.

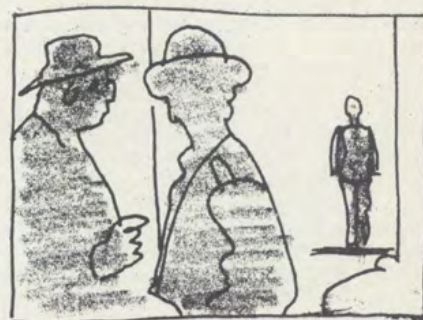
An easy example of discontinuity used to dissolve time comes in *Muriel*: the shot of the cake put down on the table, and in the next shot three-quarters eaten. Here Resnais is lightening his narrative of any ballast of detail which might have weighed it down. In the same film, one can find connections between the ship which people keep talking about but which is never seen,

and the requirements of the fixed and limited frame of the comic strip, which means that one shows only what one needs within the frame, and must use evocation when going outside its limits. Another example from *Muriel* is the shot of the house, with the meal going on upstairs and dialogue overheard as though the speakers were present in the shot. Here Resnais is making a quite conscious reference to the Smilin' Jack strip, in which the aviator hero had a habit of flying over skyscrapers from whose windows floated balloons of dialogue.

Resnais has transposed one specifically comic strip technique to the screen in a highly original way. This consists of manipulating the tones of the decor in certain scenes—up to a brilliant white in *Marienbad*, down to midnight blue in *Muriel*—or eliminating it altogether to isolate a character against a neutral background, as in *La Guerre est Finie*. Chester Gould, Dick Tracy's creator, plays with decor in rather the same non-realistic way.

In films, memory of some event in the past may be translated in the form of images and comment. But a 'supposed' event—something which may never actually have happened—normally has to be evoked by a spoken narrative. It isn't the same in the strips, where there has never been any difficulty about inserting 'imagined' images into the middle of 'real' ones. Hence, in *La Guerre est Finie*, the contradictory evocations of Juan and his supposed fate, which vary in character according to Diego's mood at the moment.

Perhaps these fugitive glimpses may indicate that there is a rich quarry to be mined in the relationship between Alain Resnais, film-maker, and Alain Resnais of the editorial board of *Giff-Wiff*.



Two sketches by Resnais for his almost unknown short film "Le Mystère de l'Atelier Quinze", made in 1957 with a text by Chris Marker. We are grateful to "l'Avant-Scène Cinéma" for permission to publish this material, and also the still from "Toute la Mémoire du Monde."

BOOK REVIEWS

JOSEF VON STERNBERG, by Herman G. Weinberg. Illustrated. (Cinema d'Aujourd'hui, No. 45, Editions Seghers, Paris. 7.10 Fr.)
THE FILMS OF JOSEF VON STERNBERG, by Andrew Sarris. Illustrated. (The Museum of Modern Art, New York, \$4.95.)

CURIOUS, REALLY, that so fervent a Sternbergian as Herman Weinberg should have produced so dull a book. Given the flurry of laudatory articles which have multiplied over the past few years, one would have thought it reasonable to take Sternberg's importance more or less for granted; but Weinberg still spends so much of his time crying genius that he has little left for demonstration. The films themselves come second to abstract panegyrics on Sternberg's intelligence, sensibility and discretion, to a lengthy lament on the fact that his style has produced no disciples, and an embarrassing disquisition on Hellenic culture to explain the Pygmalion-Galatea nature of the

Sternberg-Dietrich collaboration. Dietrich, of course, is not allowed to possess any talent: before Sternberg she was nothing, and afterwards her career was "only intermittently interesting, and almost always lacked the humour and panache" which she found with Sternberg (and bang go *Song of Songs*, *Angel*, *Destry*, *Flame of New Orleans*, etc. etc.).

The biographical chapter is sound (much of the information appears in *Fun in a Chinese Laundry*), but even here Weinberg is betrayed by his eagerness to load the dice for Sternberg. George K. Arthur did not make his screen debut in *The Salvation Hunters*: he had already played in at least five British films, as well as Cruze's *Hollywood*. Marlene Dietrich, far from being "nothing" at the time of *The Blue Angel*, was a well established actress, and was not introduced to American screens by *Morocco*: at least two of her German films, Robison's *Manon Lescaut* and Harry Piel's *Sein Grösster Bluff*, had been released in America in 1926 and 1928. There is also some sloppy dating which makes it seem that Sternberg received his famous lesson in framing from Emile Chautard in 1921 (the date appears correctly as 1919 in the filmography); and sloppy writing which makes it seem that he received his "von" while working in England in 1922, instead of in America in 1924. Fussiness details perhaps, but irritating when added to the plethora of spelling mistakes (Alice Deuer Miller, Anna Q. Nilson, Roy William Neil), not all of which, one suspects, are due to the French printer's devil who is everywhere apparent. If I seem unduly ungenerous to this book, it is probably because Weinberg, who obviously can write about Sternberg with real insight, instead relies so often on waffle of the sort which argues that the contemporary cinema is inferior because De Sica's *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* isn't as subtle as the best of Lubitsch.

For a cool, perceptive round-up which substantiates all its claims, turn to Andrew Sarris, whose film-by-film analysis is the best thing I have read on Sternberg. Only 56 quarto pages, many of them illustrations, but each one worth its weight in gold, starting with his evocation of the Sternberg world: "Although there is much violence

and death... there is relatively little action. The various murders, duels, executions, suicides, and assaults serve merely as poetic punctuation for lives drifting to their destinations in reflective repose. Death in this context is less a conclusion than a termination. The paradox of violence without action is supplemented by the paradox of virtue without morality. There are no codes or systems in these dream worlds: the characters retain their civilised graces despite the most desperate struggles for psychic survival, and it is their poise under pressure, their style under stress, that grants them a measure of heroic stature and stoic calm."

He puts forward a striking argument for Sternberg's modernity: "What has always seemed oblique and obscure in Sternberg's art as compared with that of his contemporaries is the director's reluctance to reveal everything about his characters. On the purely visual level, this reluctance is expressed through veils and filters. On the dramatic plane, Sternberg has generally avoided the kind of direct confrontations in which characters spell out all their motivations... Some of Sternberg's severer critics have written off the director's pregnant pauses and silences as meaningless mystification and obfuscation. Such criticism seemed more plausible in the Twenties and Thirties when themes of ennui and alienation were less fashionable than they are today." (For me, this also explains why *Docks of New York*, so splendid visually, seems ultimately less satisfying than either *Underworld* or *The Last Command*: by comparison with the enigmatic Evelyn Brent—not to mention Dietrich—Betty Compson "is more prone to wearing her heart on her sleeve.")

The gradual crystallisation of the Dietrich persona is cunningly traced film by film, from its beginnings in *Morocco*, where "Dietrich is in the process of discovering herself, and the awakening of self-awareness visibly delights her. Never again will she be so defencelessly charming, so personally accessible to the audience at each instant of her performance." By the time of *The Scarlet Empress*, "The sweet curiosity of *Morocco* has hardened into glacial guile. Romantic adventures have degenerated into erotic escapades; warm passion has frozen into calculating carnality." And finally, in *The Devil is a Woman*, she has "been polished to an inhuman perfection beyond the accidental beauties of impulse and instinct. Her beauty is now so uninflected by dramatic development that even her cruelties are trivial."

It is because he is constantly aware of what he calls the "subtle humour of the Sternberg oeuvre as a whole," that Sarris can wield a scalpel to describe, say, *The Devil is a Woman* as "Sternberg's coldest film. Its art is bone dry; its feelings parched in a desert of despair," without any loss of sympathy for the splendour. Where Weinberg is merely cross because audiences laugh when Amy Jolly makes her high-heeled exit into the desert, Sarris acknowledges the absurdity, but adds, "The complaint that a woman in high heels would not walk off into the desert is none the less meaningless. A dream does not require endurance, only the will to act."

All in all, Sarris is a must for any Sternberg admirer.

TOM MILNE

AGAINST INTERPRETATION, By Susan Sontag. (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 35s.)

FOR A GOOD MANY PEOPLE Susan Sontag's name must still conjure up a diabolic shaft of parody by Eleanor Bron and a reminder of the occasion she was parodying: that unhappy *Monitor* conversation in which Miss Sontag and Jonathan Miller chatted relentlessly on about pop culture and movies while the camera kept edging up on them from extraordinary angles. Poor Miss Sontag, introduced as a kind of polymath guide to the New York cultural scene, was an unlucky victim of *Monitor's* brave effort to be casual about the arts—marooned on the doorstep with a BBC unit, if one remembers, while trying to interview Andy Warhol.

There is nothing casual about her book *Against Interpretation*, a collection of critical articles dating from 1962-65. The introduction slightly ominously refers to them as "case-studies of my evolving sensibility... I have the impression not so much of having, for myself, resolved a certain number of alluring and troubling problems as of having used them up." But it is "the interestingness of the problems," as she says, that concerns her, rather than their resolution. And in approaching them she's prepared to go resolutely if rather didactically in off the deep end.

The first two essays, for instance, are splendid frontal attacks on the idea of a critical duty to 'interpret' a work of art. Modern criticism, she argues, "Excavates, and as it excavates, destroys: it digs 'behind' the text to find a sub-text which is the true one." It is more concerned with what the artist is supposed to be 'really saying' (i.e., the myth of content over form) than with the problem of what is simply there, and of how certain effects work in certain ways.

(A fair example, and a neat reversal of orthodox judgments, is her comment on *Triumph of the Will*: "Through Riefenstahl's genius the 'content' has come to play a purely formal role.")

Variations on this central thesis turn up in various contexts. The argument, for instance, that "a great deal of today's art may be understood as motivated by a flight from interpretation" is picked up in a later chapter about the cult of the Happening. As literary critic she writes about Lukacs and Sarraute and Camus; as theatre critic about the *Marat/Sade* and Arthur Miller; as film critic about Bresson and Resnais, *Vivre sa Vie*, *Flaming Creatures*, and the way science fiction films make a game out of destruction.

Only six of the book's 26 chapters are directly about the cinema. But Miss Sontag assumes, as few literary critics in this country would probably be ready to do, that references to Antonioni, Bergman or (interestingly) Ozu may be part of anyone's cultural baggage. And when she writes about films, her essays gain weight from their context. For Bresson, "art is the discovery of what is necessary"; Godard is "perhaps the only director today who is interested in 'philosophical films' and possesses an intelligence and discretion equal to the task"; in *Marienbad*, "the mood is one of stylised reticence, but one does not feel, sufficiently, the pressure of what the characters are being reticent about." These are random statements, persuasively substantiated. Miss Sontag does not wear her intellectual equipment lightly; but in the shrill context of most American film criticism, one respects the more the appeal of the well-ordered mind.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

CATALOGO BOLAFFI DEL CINEMA ITALIANO. Tutti i film italiani del dopoguerra. Illustrated. (Giulio Bolaffi Editore, Rome. L.14,000.)

FOURTEEN THOUSAND LIRE comes to more than eight pounds, which is pretty steep for what is after all only a catalogue. The editors list every Italian film made since 1945, but with the exception of about twelve important films per year, they give only the title, director, actors, takings at the box-office (!), and the genre. This leads to some Polonius-like hair-splitting: there are sentimental comedies, popular musical comedies, and even, God help us, humorous comedies. *I Fidanziati* is described as "intimate," *Rogopag* as "anthological," and Pasolini's *Vangelo Secondo Matteo* incontrovertibly as "biblical."

However, for the dozen "important" films of the year, and the editors' notion of importance goes from *Europe by Night* to *Il Mare*, we get one or two stills, complete credits, and a critical text: *Il Mare*, we learn, is boring and prolix.

The index is the most fun: we discover that there have been 17 Maciste films, 8 Hercules, 6 Ursus, and one splendid creation called *Hercules, Samson, Maciste and Ursus: The Invincibles*. As one might expect, there are twelve films whose titles begin with Sexy, 15 with Vendetta, 22 with the word Last, but, joy of joys, 25 that begin with Amore. In short, a book for libraries, or perhaps a Christmas gift for "The Cinéophile who has everything."

RICHARD ROUD

Obituary: J. P. R. Golightly

J. P. R. GOLIGHTLY, one of the great stalwarts of the British documentary movement, died on January 28th; he had been in failing health for some time.

Golightly—originally an agriculturalist with a special interest in forestry—joined the E.M.B. Film Unit in 1931 as driver and guide to Robert Flaherty, who was just starting work on what was to become *Industrial Britain*. After this Golightly became manager, organiser, whipping-boy, father-confessor and a dozen other things to countless documentary film-makers. Although he never wrote a script or made a film he had a great influence in the documentary film movement—difficult to define perhaps, but none the less catalytic, whether his meticulously tidy desk was in the G.P.O. Film Unit, Film Centre, or Canada House, to which, during the War, he was seconded at John Grierson's special request as the London representative of the National Film Board of Canada.

Golightly was a man of high standards and tenacious loyalties; he had a slightly macabre sense of humour in the Laurel and Hardy sense. His silences could be as significant as his brief but perceptive (often pungent) comments on films and film policies. His companionship and friendship were sought by many but granted only to a privileged few. Those few will be inconsolable; but he will also be sorely missed by many erstwhile colleagues and acquaintances.

BASIL WRIGHT

SHORTS AND CINEMAS

continued from page 67

It is anybody's guess what films would actually be made in an emancipated shorts industry. The breakthroughs one would look for would not be in magazine or travelogue or interest shorts, whose function has to an extent moved over to television, and which were, in any case, anachronisms in the cinema before the first *Look at Life*. Certainly one foresees new and exciting developments of the animated film, of the possibility of the film for fantasy. Most of all one would look for an exploration of the possibilities of the comic or dramatic film. (It is interesting to note here that Lindsay Anderson's most recent film was a short comic fable; and that John Irvin is currently trying to set up a short dramatic film with a script—a duologue between acts of love—by Michael Hastings.)

What one hopes for least, perhaps, is conscious experiment. Experiment is something that happens, not that is invoked. (Again television has afforded—in ATV's "Experiment" and BBC2's "Six"—awful warnings of what is likely to happen when 'experiment' is the director's brief, and not his prerogative.) The British Film Institute has recently changed the name of its Experimental Film Committee, now the Production Board, because the word 'experimental' was felt to carry misleading associations, perhaps discouraging some potential applicants.

* * *

The only point in speculation of this sort is the possibility that against all commercial principles and practice good shorts with qualities that positively interest or excite the general audience could come to have the extra bargaining power of actually attracting people into the cinema. One trade spokesman told us "No one raves about the shorts they see in the cinema and says 'What a wonderful short, you must see it'—I haven't heard anyone say that in years." This is not strictly true. It was our personal experience that a great many people said it about *A Home of One's Own*, and our personal feeling that the word-of-mouth reputation of the film must actually have told at the box-office. It has happened before. Laurel and Hardy sold tickets and so did the first Disney shorts. Neither of them could do so now, but something else might. It would be nice if that something were a British product.

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M-G-M for *Blow-Up*, *Grand Prix*, *The Bad and the Beautiful*.
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PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *Sunset Boulevard*, *Half a Sixpence*.
20th CENTURY-FOX for *Beloved Infidel*.
BLC/COLUMBIA for *The Professionals*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Deadly Affair*.
BLC/BRITISH LION/WALTER READE/STERLING PRODUCTIONS for *Ulysses*.
LONDON INDEPENDENT PRODUCERS/MONARCH for *Accident*.
BORDER FILM PRODUCTIONS for *Echo of the Jackboot*.
CONTEMPORARY FILMS for *The Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short*, *Yesterday Girl*.
GALA FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *The Eavesdropper*.
GALA FILM DISTRIBUTORS/MONTAIGNE PRODUCTIONS for *Le Deuxième Souffle*.
MITHRAS FILMS for *Labour Party*, *Carousella*.
BRITISH TRANSPORT FILMS/GEOFFREY JONES for *Snow*.
ANTHONY HARVEY/GENE PERSSON ENTERPRISES for *Dutchman*.
PARIS FILM (PARIS)/FIVE FILM (ROME) for *Belle de Jour*.
TIBIDABO FILMS (BARCELONA) for *Circles*.
AXEL MADSEN for *Entre la Mer et l'Eau Douce*.
RICHARD WILLIAMS ANIMATION PRODUCTIONS for credit title still *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.
L'AVANT-SCENE DU CINEMA for *Toute la Mémoire du Monde* and sketches by Resnais.
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *Paris 1900*, *Spanish Earth*, *March of Time* stills (from *Black Areas* and *Rehearsal for War*), Sidney Street Siege newsreel.

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FILM GUIDE

Films of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two three or four stars.

******ACCIDENT** (L.I.P./Monarch) Three men, two wives, one girl, discovering their power to tear each other emotionally to ribbons in the lazy, enchanted setting of an Oxford summer. Commandingly directed (Losey) and written (Pinter), so that each lucid incident sends out its echoing, mysterious reverberations. (Dirk Bogarde, Stanley Baker, Vivien Merchant, Delphine Seyrig. Eastman Colour.) *Reviewed.*

******ACTOR'S REVENGE, AN** (Contemporary) Bizarre, brilliant Ichikawa film about a female impersonator forced by convention to take part in a grisly revenge plot. In style, something like a witty coalition between Kabuki and Jacobean tragedy. (Kazuo Hasegawa, Ayako Wakao, Raizo Ichikawa. Daiei Colour, Daieiscope.)

ALLEZ FRANCE (Gala) Over-excitable Robert Dhéry farce concerning a French rugby fan in London and his adventures with English policemen and Diana Dors. Not funny. (Robert Dhéry, Colette Brosset, Ronald Fraser, Bernard Cribbins. Eastman Colour.)

******BLOW-UP** (M-G-M) Antonioni mingles an obscurely swinging and vividly decked-out London with an oblique mystery story. The result is an odd, beautiful, and desperately sad parable about his old subject—the fallibility of the contemporary human male. (David Hemmings, Vanessa Redgrave, Sarah Miles. Metrocolor.) *Reviewed.*

****CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT** (Planet) The Falstaff story, extracted from *Henry IV* Parts One and Two, with Welles in autumnal mood and the emphasis on mortality rather than cakes and ale. Subdued, and with one or two exceptions awkwardly played, though there are virtuoso passages. (John Gielgud, Keith Baxter, Jeanne Moreau.)

COUNTESS FROM HONG KONG, A (Rank) Marlon Brando as the gentleman from the State Department who finds Sophia Loren has stowed herself away in his cabin. Chaplin's defiant, and very sad, effort to resurrect the kind of 1930s comedy he never made, for the uncaring Sixties. (Sydney Chaplin, Tippi Hedren. Technicolor.) *Reviewed.*

****DEADLY AFFAIR, THE** (BLC/Columbia) James Mason as the fashionably downbeat (John Le Carré) agent at odds with faithless wife, ruthless spies and unfeeling world; rather agreeably glamorised by Sidney Lumet into an old-fashioned thriller. (Simone Signoret, Harry Andrews, Harriet Andersson. Technicolor.) *Reviewed.*

DON'T LOSE YOUR HEAD (Rank) The adventures of Citizen Camembert and Sir Rodney Ffing, at grips with the French Revolution. Routine *Carry On* offering—much smut and no surprises. (Sidney James, Kenneth Williams, Jim Dale, Charles Hawtrey; director, Gerald Thomas. Eastman Colour.)

*****FEMME EST UNE FEMME, UNE** (Amanda) Lubitsch, Bob Fosse and Geneviève (Smile, smile) Gibbs Cluny combine to allow Godard to make his most cheerful film. No more need be said for aficionados; for the others, one can only report that after the six years since it was made it is now even younger than springtime. (Anna Karina, Jean-Claude Brialy, Jean-Paul Belmondo. Eastman Colour, Franscope.)

***FUNERAL IN BERLIN** (Paramount) A second adventure for the Ippress man. Plot more convoluted than exciting and direction neutral, but there are nice Berlin locations and a swaggering performance by Oscar Homolka as a two-faced Commie. (Michael Caine, Eva Renzi, Paul Hubschmid; director, Guy Hamilton. Technicolor, Panavision.) *Reviewed.*

***FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM, A** (United Artists) A slight case of collision between Dick Lester's swinging style and the stagebound musical about the lighter side of Ancient Rome. Result distinctly on the frantic side, though some of the marginal jokes are fun. (Zero Mostel, Phil Silvers, Buster Keaton. DeLuxe Color.)

*****GRAND PRIX** (M-G-M/Cinerama) Frankheimer invades the world of Formula One motor-racing with an infectious enthusiasm that splits his screen into splendid fragments. His cursory script tends to leave the cast by the wayside; otherwise this is a magnificently photographed summary of everything one associates both with the sport and with Frankheimer. (Yves Montand, James Garner, Eva Marie Saint, Toshiro Mifune. Metrocolor, Super-Panavision 70.) *Reviewed.*

***HAWAII** (United Artists) A thoroughly respectable epic, adapted from a small section of Michener's vast tome, taking a literate but superficial look at the disastrous effect of 19th century Calvinist bigotry on Polynesia. But there is the usual pressure to be spectacular, and the second half drags. (Max von Sydow, Julie Andrews, Richard Harris; director, George Roy Hill. De Luxe Color, Panavision.)

***HOMME ET UNE FEMME, UN** (United Artists) Anouk Aimée as a film continuity girl, Jean-Louis Trintignant as the racing motorist she falls in love with. Lashings of seductive camerawork (sports cars, the beach at Deauville), engaging star performances, extremely self-conscious charm, but it gets you. (Pierre Barouh, Valérie Lagrange; director, Claude Lelouch. Eastman Colour.)

HOTEL (Warner-Pathé) Romance and tears behind the plush façade of a New Orleans hotel during a take-over bid. Lush old-time emotional extravaganza, with a lift disaster solving the more insoluble problems, directed at a snail's pace by Richard Quine. (Rod Taylor, Melvyn Douglas, Merle Oberon, Kevin McCarthy, Karl Malden. Technicolor.)

IS PARIS BURNING? (Paramount) René Clément comes a cropper with this lavish yet hollow reconstruction of the liberation of Paris. Politically confused and stuffed with guest stars to little effect; only really comes to life with the actual newsreels. (Gert Fröbe, Orson Welles, Leslie Caron, Anthony Perkins. Panavision.)

KISS THE GIRLS AND MAKE THEM DIE (BLC/Columbia) Yet another madman seeks to rule the world. Banal Italian-made spy spoof, a long way after *That Man from Rio*. Even the gadgets look tired. (Michael Connors, Dorothy Provine, Raf Vallone, Terry-Thomas; director, Henry Levin. Technicolor.)

*****LOST SEX** (Tony Tenser) Despite catchpenny title, Kaneto Shindo's new film sensitively explores the plight of an impotent man who is cared for by a lively widow—and being Japanese, veers off into black comedy at the most unlikely moments. Lovely snowy locations. (Hideo Kanze, Nobuko Otowa.)

*****MAN FOR ALL SEASONS, A** (BLC/Columbia) Fred Zinnemann's intelligent if rather academic version of Robert Bolt's play. Always good to look at, and fine performances all round, with Paul Scofield's More towering over all. But the film's faults are those of the play. (Robert Shaw, Leo McKern, Wendy Hiller. Technicolor.) *Reviewed.*

****MARAT/SADE, THE** (United Artists) Peter Brook's arresting adaptation of the Weiss play, resourcefully shot on a single set and just as spikily spectacular as it was on the stage. Patrick Magee superb as De Sade. (Glenda Jackson, Ian Richardson. DeLuxe Color.)

******MASCULIN FEMININ** (Gala) Godard's eleventh, and as expected unexpected as the other ten. "15 Precise Facts" about life today: tenderness and tragedy, interviews and insolence, youth and yé-yé. (Jean-Pierre Léaud, Chantal Goya, Marlène Jobert.)

NIGHT OF THE GENERALS, THE (BLC/Columbia) Complex melodrama with pretentious overtones, combining the tracking down of a pathological killer with the July plot against Hitler. Peter O'Toole as a maniac Nazi General and abstract Justice in the person of Omar Sharif. A few good performances on the sidelines. (Tom Courtenay, Donald Pleasence, Joanna Pettet; director, Anatole Litvak. Technicolor, Panavision.)

NIGHT TIDE (Gala) Curtis Harrington's low-budget film about a lonely sailor who falls in love with an amusement park mermaid in Santa Monica. Some moments of interest, but overburdened with *avant-garde* pretensions and inadequate acting. (Dennis Hopper, Linda Dawson, Gavin Muir.)

PENELOPE (M-G-M) Comedy thriller with Natalie Wood as a banker's wife who robs a bank for kicks. Some pleasant colour, but the pace is slack and the gags few and far between. (Ian Bannen, Dick Shawn; director, Arthur Hiller. Metrocolor, Panavision.)

RAPE, THE (Eagle) Ten inmates of a women's reformatory escape to a remote island inhabited by a former Nazi SS man and comrades. Glum Greek exercise in sex and rampant bestiality. (Lefteris Vournaz, Floretta Zana; director, Dinos Dimopoulos.)

RETURN OF THE GUNFIGHTER (M-G-M) Straightforward Western in the classic manner, with Robert Taylor as a veteran gunfighter. Enough action to compensate for some lacklustre direction. (Ana Martin, Chad Everett, Lyle Bettger; director, James Neilson. Metrocolor.)

*****SECOND BREATH** (Gala) Melville's *Le Deuxième Souffle*, about an ageing gangster who breaks jail, joins a masterly hijacking operation, and is betrayed. Brilliantly concentrated thriller, with a strong romantic undertow in the director's feeling for the morality of gangland. (Lino Ventura, Paul Meurisse.) *Reviewed.*

SEDUCED IN SODOM (Sebricon) Grotesque drama of passion spent and frustrated among a family of Moroccan Jews living just round the corner from Sodom. Overheated in all departments. (Pierre Brasseur, Mike Marshall, Ahuva Goren; director, Mehamen Golan.)

***TAMING OF THE SHREW, THE** (BLC/Columbia) Much more Zeffirelli than Shakespeare, with the emphasis on colour, clothes, Padua in an apparently permanent state of carnival, and extras mopping and mowing in every corner of the screen. The Burtons acquit themselves tolerably. (Cyril Cusack, Michael Hordern, Michael York. Technicolor, Panavision.) *Reviewed.*

10:30 P.M. SUMMER (United Artists) Overwrought adaptation of Marguerite Duras' novel about three glum visitors to Spain who meet a wife-murderer on the run. Heated direction, torrential thunderstorms, and a bizarre performance by Melina Mercouri, glowering balefully over the collar of a military raincoat. (Peter Finch, Romy Schneider; director, Jules Dassin. Technicolor.)

TOBRUK (Rank) Major Rock Hudson leads a motley collection of British Tommies and militant Jews (in German uniforms) against the Afrika Corps petrol dumps. Finale spectacular, but there's a long, long trek across the desert beforehand. (Nigel Green, George Peppard, Guy Stockwell; director, Arthur Hiller. Technicolor, Techniscope.)

TRAVIATA, LA (B.H.E./Eagle) The Rome Opera in a not unsuccessful film version of the Verdi opera. Costumes and settings colourful, and some fine singing, particularly from Anna Moffo. (Franco Bonisoli, Gino Bechi; director, Mario Lanfranchi. Technicolor.)

****VIE DE CHATEAU, LA** (Gala) First feature by Jean-Paul Rappeneau. An engagingly zany comedy of Occupied France, with young chateaine (Catherine Deneuve) torn between morose husband, handsome parachutist and German commandant. (Philippe Noiret, Pierre Brasseur, Henri Garcin.)

VIKING QUEEN, THE (Warner-Pathé) The trials and tribulations of the Romans in Britain a hundred years after Caesar. A few spirited interventions from the Druids, but the rest are a dreary lot. (Don Murray, Carita, Donald Houston; director, Don Chaffey. Technicolor.)

WEDDING—SWEDISH STYLE (Border) Which means, of course, that everyone is either mad, drunk, lecherous, pregnant, humiliated or about to be raped. It is not, incredibly enough, a comedy. (Jarl Kulle, Christina Schollin, Lena Hansson; director, Åke Falck.)

****WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?** (Warner-Pathé) Surprisingly successful screen version of Edward Albee's storming play about married life on the campus. Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton manage the marathon screaming match with relish. (George Segal, Sandy Dennis; director, Mike Nichols.)

****YESTERDAY GIRL** (Contemporary) The story of wayward Anita G. and her encounters with the West German age of affluent indifference. Alexander Kluge's film reveals strong Godard influences, but his own intelligence, concern and spiky humour; the first German screen import in years worth seeking out. (Alexandra Kluge, Günther Mack.) *Reviewed.*

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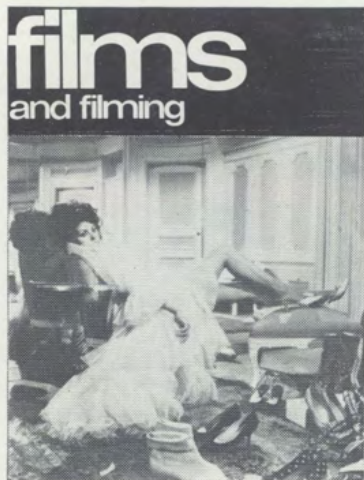
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